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THE DETECTIVE QUARTET.

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RUTH NEUMANN. BY TOM W. KING.



THE MYSTERY OF HENRY WARENNE'S DEATH WAS SOLVED! THE KEENEST OF THE DETECTIVE QUARTET HAD TRIUMPHED.

The Detective Quartet;

OR,
Suicide, Murder or Accident?

The Story of Henry Warenne.

BY T. W. KING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DAUNTLESS DETECTIVE,"
"PONY, THE COWBOY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

DETECTIVE BRONSON'S DISCOVERY.

TO LET—That very desirable three-story and basement stone and brick house, No. 16 West 80th street, near Central Park. Newly decorated and in perfect order. Can be seen at any time. Owner on premises.

This "ad" caught Cameron Bronson's eye as he glanced through the advertising columns of the *Daily Messenger*. He had been looking for a house in that locality, and this appeared favorable; so he cut it out.

He was at breakfast at the St. Cyr Hotel, and opposite him was seated his wife—a bride of a little over a month.

They had just returned from their wedding journey, and Bronson, tired of hotel, flat, and boarding-house life, had proposed to his better-half that they rent a house somewhere near Central Park, and stay there during the summer—not necessarily continuously, but make it their headquarters.

She seconded the proposition eagerly. Raised in a small village in the interior of the State, a residence in New York—the great metropolis—seemed to her like the realization of a cherished dream; so as Cameron laid aside the paper, he remarked:

"I think I have found it, dear!" and handed her the slip he had cut from the *Messenger*.

"Oh, Cam!" she cried, "what a lovely location. But—" and her pretty forehead grew into corrugated roughness as she stopped in a de-lightful perplexity.

"But what, child?" he asked.

"The rent—it must be ENORMOUS!!!"

Nothing but capital letters and three exclamation points can express her dismay as she pronounced the word.

"That remains to be seen," replied her husband, encouragingly, "so if you will be ready in half-an-hour, we will take a run on the Elevated up to Eighty-first street station and inspect."

Which they did.

The locality charmed Mrs. Bronson, and she said to her husband:

"Cam, if you were not a detective I would wish you were—"

"What, little one?"

"A millionaire."

"Well, I may be one yet: a detective may become a millionaire, but I'll guarantee that no millionaire will ever become a detective."

Thus chatting, they walked over to the avenue, turned south for a block and into the street on which the advertised house was situated.

"Number 16," said Bronson; "that must be on the south side of the street and not very far from the corner."

In a few minutes they reached it.

"Oh, Cam!" cried the delighted girl who accompanied him, "isn't it lovely?"

"It is a magnificent location, and if the rent is not too high for our small purse, we'll take it. That is if—"

"If what, Cam?"

"If the interior meets our expectations; we are not going to rent a house simply because it has a handsome exterior and a good location."

"Certainly not."

"Then we'll ring the bell and inspect the premises."

With a promptness that bespoke well-trained servants, the door was thrown open in response to his touch on the electric button.

"I am here to look at this house," said Bronson, "which, I believe, is advertised for rent in the morning papers."

"Yes, sir; walk in, sir. And the lady too, sir. Step into the parlor, sir, and you too, madam. Mr. Warenne is in the library—that little room at the end of the hall. He told me to send any one there that called in relation to the house."

"Then shall I go in there?"

"If you please, sir."

"Then, Mollie, sit down, and after I have spoken to Mr. Warenne, as his name seems to be, we will go over the house together."

"Very well, Cam," returned his wife, who was very deep in the mysteries of some beautiful piece of embroidery she had found on a stand in the corner.

The servant led the way to the back room, tapped on the door, and without waiting for an answer, threw it wide open.

Bronson stepped in.

Mr. Warenne was seated at his desk, in front of a window that looked out on the back yard.

He seemed to be reading or writing or something of the sort.

Bronson waited, thinking that he would turn in a few moments and speak to him.

He did not wish to interrupt him.

He waited and waited, until at length he grew tired.

Perhaps, he thought, "he was so occupied with what he was doing that he did not hear the servant announce me."

So he spoke.

"Excuse me, Mr. Warenne, but—

No answer.

Mr. Warenne did not move.

Perplexed and a little vexed, Bronson stepped forward and touched the silent figure on the shoulder.

It was seated in a revolving chair, which at Bronson's touch turned swiftly.

And the body—for it was nothing more than that—pitched headlong to the floor before the detective could grasp it.

Instantly Bronson was on his knees at the side of the man, crying for help and feeling for some sign of life.

But there was none.

Henry Warenne was dead.

CHAPTER II.

MURDER OR SUICIDE?

In an instant the house was in an uproar.

Servants ran hither and thither, Bronson's wife hastened to his side, and in a few moments the dead man's widow hurried down-stairs.

Shrieking, she flew to his side, shrieking flung herself prostrate on the floor.

Bronson, the only one who preserved his senses, turned every one else out of the room but the two ladies, and sent the man who had admitted him for a policeman.

Before the latter arrived, he turned in an ambulance call.

And soon the clattering wagon dashed up to the door, and the prompt surgeon in charge sprung from it and up the front steps.

He moderated his pace as he approached the library, and spoke low before the great grief that he saw there.

"I can do nothing," he said, as he felt the dead man's pulse.

And then, as he passed out, he whispered to Bronson, whom he recognized from former and somewhat similar meetings:

"This," said he, "is a case for the coroner, Mr. Bronson."

And then he added, significantly:

"And for you."

Bronson followed him out into the hall, closing the door behind him.

"What do you mean, doctor?" he asked.

The doctor looked about him to see that he was not overheard, and replied:

"Murder—or suicide."

"What do you mean?"

"Did you not notice the bullet-wound in his head?—but of course you did not; only a practiced eye could see it at first glance."

"A bullet-wound! And where?"

"Just over the right ear—so small as to be scarcely discernible."

"But, doctor—"

"I can anticipate all of your remarks in that direction."

"Well?"

"The bleeding, as is often the case when a gunshot-wound, made by a weapon of small caliber, closes behind the missile, was internal and not external, so no traces of it are visible."

"And you are positive—"

"As positive as if I had made a post-mortem examination."

"Which you will make, later."

"No, that comes in the province of the coroner."

"Murder or suicide, you say?"

"One or the other—probably the latter. The inquest may decide."

"Will decide, you mean."

"No; I have not the slightest doubt that dozens of men are laid away in this world, every year, branded with the crime of self-murder, who perished by the hand of an assassin."

"Then, doctor, if science is so weak, we will

try by the addition of a little skill, to fathom the mystery—if mystery there be."

"Good, my friend. Investigate thoroughly, and what you may learn will be of great assistance to the coroner, I am sure."

"He shook Bronson's hand warmly.

"I must be off," he said. "Good luck to you."

"Thank you, doctor, for wish and warning. I'll try and aid the coroner to decide which it is."

The doctor left the house, and "Cam" returned to the library.

There he found his wife endeavoring to quiet Mrs. Warenne, who was moaning and sobbing by her husband's dead body, in a perfect frenzy of grief.

By persistent urging, joined almost to commands on his part, she was at length induced to retire to her room, up-stairs, whither Mollie accompanied her.

Bronson was left in the library, alone with the dead.

He examined the room carefully.

First the window.

The two sashes were locked tight, and, besides, the desk at which Mr. Warenne had been seated completely filled the embrasure.

The top of the back of it was covered with books, neatly piled, not one of which had been disturbed.

It was certain that no one had passed out through the window since the commission of the crime.

Unless, indeed, a confederate had arranged the books and fastened the window afterward.

The only other entrance to the room was through the door.

A steam radiator stood in the corner of the room.

There was no fireplace—no flue.

If it were murder, the murderer had used the door.

If suicide, where was the weapon?

Inch by inch he searched the room, as carefully as if he were seeking for buried treasure, but found nothing.

The body he did not disturb, preferring to leave that to the coroner.

He knew that those gentlemen were very touchy about their official dignity.

That they objected most decidedly when any one usurped any of their prerogatives.

So he waited for the gentleman's arrival.

It was not very long before he came.

Policemen swarmed about the house by this time, and every one of its inmates was virtually under arrest. Every one except Bronson and his wife.

For all the officers knew the detective, and deferred to him in a matter like this.

And, of course, no one disturbed Mrs. Warenne, who remained in her room.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Bronson?" asked the coroner.

"I can make nothing of it yet."

"Suicide, or heart disease? Poison, or what?"

"That, sir, is for you to decide. My business is to find the motive."

"It looks very much like heart disease," continued the official.

"Doctor Herbert spoke of a pistol wound."

"Where?"

"Over the right ear."

"Hum! This complicates matters. And you found no weapon?"

"Nothing."

"Any smell of smoke?"

"None."

"Who let you into the house?"

"This man."

The coroner turned to the old servant, whose cheeks tears coursed rapidly.

"When did you see Mr. Warenne last—alive?"

"At nine o'clock, sir. He stopped as he went into his room, and told me if any one called in relation to the house to show the visitor into the library."

"And who called first?"

"This gentleman here"—indicating the detective.

"No one else?"

"No one else, sir."

"Where have you been since?"

"In the dining-room, where I was polishing the silver."

"That is the dining-room next to the library?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you heard nothing—no voices, no sound of pistol-shot?"

"Nothing, sir?"

"You were on good terms with your late master?"

"The best, sir. To-day is the twentieth anni-

versary of my entering the service of his father—I have been in the family ever since. And this morning Mr. Warenne gave me this."

It was a handsome gold watch inscribed inside:

"For James Rawson, for his faithful services of twenty years' standing. HENRY WARENNE."

"Any questions to ask, Mr. Bronson?"

"Thank you. You say you were cleaning the silver in the dining-room. Come in there a moment," and the detective led the way.

"Please stay here a moment," he added, to the coroner. "When I rap on the wall, strike the desk heavily; I want to see if I can hear the sound."

In a moment more he wrapped. And plainly heard the sharp tap of the ruler with which the desk was struck. But the sound seemed to come from the buffet or sideboard, that stood against the wall on that side of the room.

Bronson threw the lower doors open and stuck his head inside the buffet.

"Tap the desk again!" he cried.

The sharp sound came direct to his ears and he knelt.

"Bring a candle here," he said to the butler, and, getting it, he examined the inside of the sideboard.

And found a sliding panel in the back through which he crawled into the library, through the side of the desk.

"I think it's murder, sir, and that you had better arrest the butler."

"I think so too," replied the coroner, and he ordered the man under arrest.

"Were you in the dining-room all the time?" asked Bronson.

"The dining-room and pantry, except when I let you in, sir. And oh, sir! I don't know anything about it, I swear to you!"

"That's what I am going to find out," and Bronson stepped into the pantry that opened out from the dining-room.

The window was open and he looked out from it into a side yard.

Back of the house was a vacant lot.

"The silver!"

It was the butler who called out.

Bronson hastened back.

The butler had been peering into the buffet, and was white with terror when the detective returned.

"There was a box of solid silver in there last night, sir, and—"

He was interrupted by the entrance of the coroner, who had returned to the library.

"Mr. Warenne was robbed, besides being killed, Bronson," he said. "His shirt is torn, where the studs were wrenched out, and he has no watch or chain on. Nor has he a cent in his pockets."

"Robbery and murder, then," replied the detective, "and the thief got out of the pantry window and escaped while the butler was opening the door."

CHAPTER III.

A VERDICT OF MURDER.

THERE was a moment of silence.

"You think so?" asked the coroner.

"I know it. You might as well release the butler at once, and we'll both apologize to him."

And then turning to the butler, he added:

"Go out in the yard and pick up the chain that lies under the pantry window. You can probably identify it as being the property of Mr. Warenne. The thief probably dropped it as he climbed out of the pantry window."

In a few moments the butler returned.

He had the chain in his hand, and on his face a look of double horror and perplexity.

"Oh, this is too awful, sir!" he cried, as he entered the room.

"Then the chain was Mr. Warenne's?"

"No, sir, it was never his."

"Good!" cried Bronson. "Then it belonged to the thief, and we'll catch him through it."

"Oh, don't say that, sir; don't say that!" cried the butler. "I'm sure Master Charles never did it."

"And who is Master Charles?"

"He is master's nephew, sir, Mr. Charles Lawrence."

"Been here lately?"

"Not for more than a year."

"Much here then?"

"He lived here, sir; but he and his uncle quarreled and Master Charles left the house and swore he'd never enter it again."

"And while Mr. Charles lived here, did he carry a latch-key?"

"Oh, yes, sir. He had the freedom of the house."

"While you were at work here, was the door leading into the hall open or shut?"

"Shut, sir."

"So any one coming in by the front door could have gone into the library without your seeing him."

"Yes, sir."

"But you were here all the time."

"Not all the time, sir. I was in the pantry for half an hour or so. And, sir, when the water is running, it makes such a noise I could not hear anything else."

"So, according to what you say, a man could have come in at the front door, gone into the library, quarreled with and shot Mr. Warenne without your knowing anything about it."

"Yes, sir; but I am sure Master Charles—"

"Never mind Master Charles. And then this man, if he knew of the existence of this secret passage-way between the library and the dining-room, could have crawled out that way, taking the silver with him."

"He might, sir."

"And when you went to the front door, he could have gone into the pantry, gotten out of the window, and escaped by means of the yard and the vacant lot in the rear."

"He would have been seen, sir."

"He might have been seen, you mean. Perhaps he was. Now, one more thing: did you know of this passage between these two rooms?"

"There was a register there, sir, before we put steam in."

"And before the buffet was placed here?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Charles was very fond of wood-carving, and he made the buffet, and gave it to Mrs. Warenne."

"Oh, he did."

"Yes, sir. And the desk in the library was his work, took. He is very smart, is Mr. Charles."

"He seems to be," remarked the detective, dryly. "Do you know what he and Mr. Warenne quarreled about?"

"I'm not sure, sir; but I think it was the young lady."

"Oh, there's a young lady in the case, is there? And who is she?"

"Mrs. Warenne's daughter, sir."

"Then—"

"Mrs. Warenne was a widow when she married Mr. Warenne. She had one daughter, Miss Lucy Bryton."

"And where is she now?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Well, never mind; we'll find her when she is wanted."

"Through with him?" asked the coroner.

"Yes. And I think that you will agree with me that the guilty man is Charles Lawrence."

"It looks like it."

"Very much like it. He has quarreled with Mr. Warenne; he has a latch-key; he is familiar with this buffet and the desk; we find his watch-chain outside the pantry window. What conclusion do you draw from all this?"

"The same that you have reached."

"Yes; and he blackened his crime still more by adding robbery to it."

And then, with a sudden thought, Bronson turned to the butler again.

"Was—or is—this Mr. Lawrence poor?" he asked.

"Very poor, sir. He had nothing, and when he left here he took up cabinet-making to support himself."

"And finding his trade not very remunerative, took up murder and robbery to increase his income. Do you know his present address?"

"No, sir."

"Well, we'll find him, also."

A jury was quickly gotten together, and the remains viewed.

Mrs. Warenne's examination was very short, and revealed nothing new.

The butler was the only man whose testimony amounted to anything, and it was corroborated by Mrs. Warenne.

Bronson "summed up" the testimony, and told of seeing the watch-chain.

It took the jury but a few moments to reach a conclusion, and render a verdict: "Henry Warenne came to his death from a pistol-shot fired by Charles Lawrence."

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. BRONSON TURNS DETECTIVE.

BRONSON and Mollie left the house and walked east and then south.

She had not recovered from the shock and he was very thoughtful.

"What makes you so silent, little one?" he finally asked her, after they had gone some distance.

"I was afraid of disturbing you," she replied.

"That you could not do. I know you are full of questions, and I am sure you can help me. Talk away as much as you want to."

"Then, Cam, tell me: Do you really think that this young man—Lawrence—was that his name? Do you think he killed his uncle?"

"No; unless he is as ingenious in crime as in cabinet-making. Everything is too well put together, there is not a single flaw in the chain of evidence against him."

"But you almost argued the coroner and jury into bringing in that verdict. You know I heard every word from the hall where I was sitting.

"I had a motive in that."

"A motive?"

"Yes. The verdict will be printed; added to it will be an item to the effect that I am fully convinced of the guilt of Lawrence; the real culprit or culprits will be lulled into security and their chase and capture simplified."

"I see."

"The only thing that troubles me is to explain how Mr. Warenne's assassins got into and out of the house."

A moment of silence, and then—

"Cam?"

"Well?"

"Could not he have gone out the same way that he went in?"

"What do you mean?"

"That any one possessing a duplicate key, or a skeleton one, might have entered the house by the front door, gone to the library, fired the shot and robbed the body, and then have walked out the front door again."

"He might, but he did not. He went out through the desk and buffet and took the box of silver with him."

"You seem to be pretty sure of your theory."

"I am certain of it. I found this envelope in the buffet."

"An envelope?"

"Yes. I did not think it necessary to tell the coroner all I knew, so said nothing of this. I put it in my pocket, and did not even look at more than the address."

"And that is?"

"It is directed to Mr. Henry Warenne, No. 18 West 80th street, City, and bears the city post-office mark, dated yesterday."

"Mr. Warenne was robbed, and that was taken from his pocket and afterward dropped by the thief."

"Probably. Now let us see what is inside," and he drew out the inclosure, which he opened. It bore but a line or two.

"DEAR UNCLE:—I will call on you to-morrow morning. It is time matters were settled once for all between us."

"And it is signed?" asked Mollie, as Bronson paused in his reading.

"Charles Lawrence."

Again there was a silence.

This time he broke it.

"That bit of paper will hang him."

"Lawrence?"

"No! The man who wrote it!"

"Then you do not believe that the nephew wrote it?"

"No, again. It was written by the man who placed the chain where I first saw it, who stole the silver, who killed Henry Warenne. He built well, but he has overreached himself. The letter is the step too far."

"Oh!" cried Mollie, "I do not know Mr. Lawrence, and I never even heard of Miss Lucy Bryton before to-day; but I am so glad you think he is innocent."

"I am sure of it. The man who committed the crime and who plotted to ruin the nephew is an enemy of his, probably a rival. If he has a warm friend, who knows Miss Bryton, and who is familiar with Lawrence's past life, that friend is the murderer."

"And you think you can find him?"

"Oh, that I can't say. But we will try."

"We? Are you going to let me help you?"

"I'm going to ask you to. Will you?"

"So gladly. What can I do, though?"

"Much. While I hunt for Lawrence, you find Miss Bryton. Then we'll find the murderer."

CHAPTER V.

MR. LAWRENCE IS DROWNED.

AFTER leaving Mrs. Bronson at their hotel, "Cam" started out to look for Lawrence, and, thanks to the knowledge he had of his occupation and a city Directory, he succeeded in locating his man in a few moments. Arrived at the address given, he inquired for the "boss."

The Detective Quartet.

"Boss is not in," was the somewhat surly reply, given him by the man of whom he had inquired.

"Where is he?"

"Out."

"So you said before. Where has he gone?"

"It's none of your business."

"Perhaps it isn't," calmly replied Bronson, keeping his temper. "And again, perhaps it is. In any case if it isn't I'll make it so."

He threw back his coat, displayed his shield, and spoke again, but this time sharply:

"You'll save yourself trouble and me delay if you'll answer more civilly: where is your employer?"

The man's manner and tone changed at once.

"A policeman came in a while ago, sir," he replied, respectfully, "and asked to see him alone. In a few minutes they went out together and I heard the 'boss' tell the foreman that he was going to Police Headquarters."

"Who is foreman?"

"He's over there by the window. Shall I call him?"

"No, I'll speak to him myself," and the detective crossed the shop.

"You are the foreman here?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; what can I do for you?"

"I want to see you alone for a moment."

"Very well, sir; step this way."

And the foreman led the way to the office, into which he invited Bronson to enter, and then closed the door.

Without any preliminaries the detective began:

"You have a man working here by the name of Lawrence?"

"Yes, sir."

"Charles Lawrence?"

"That is his name, I think."

"Where is he?"

"He has not been here to-day."

"When did you see him last?"

"Yesterday afternoon. He said then that he had an engagement for this morning, and that he would not be here until late, to-day, if he came at all."

"What did the policeman who called want with your employer?"

"I do not know, sir; he did not say."

"Have you Lawrence's address?"

"It is on the books, I think."

"Would you mind giving it to me?"

"Not at all, if you'll give me a good reason for so doing."

"Is that reason sufficient?"

A glance at the badge of authority was enough, and in a moment more Bronson left the shop with the desired address in his note-book.

The house in front of which he shortly stopped was a pleasant-looking one enough, and in answer to his ring a comely woman of forty or thereabouts opened the door.

"Mr. Lawrence?" she repeated, in answer to his question. "No, sir; he's not in. I don't know when he will be in. He told me he wouldn't be back for a long time. He left about noon, I think."

"And where did he go?"

"That I can't tell you. He drove up to the door in a cab, hurried up-stairs in a perfect gale, tumbled his things into his trunk—I saw him, for he called me to come up and get my pay-handed me a month's rent more than was coming to me!"

"He had plenty of money, then?"

"Lots of it—more, I believe, than he ever had in his life before."

"And then he left?"

Bundled his trunk down-stairs and onto the top of the cab, tumbled in and banged the door, "all right!" he cried, and they were out of sight before I had finished wiping his parting salute from off my cheek."

"Did he seem excited?"

"Excited? That he did. Jumped at every noise, ran to the window twenty times and looked out, got so mixed with his packing that I said to him:

"Charley, ye're as excited as if ye'd been killin' an' robbin' some one!"

"And what did he say to that?"

"He got white as a ghost, looked out of the window once more, and then he whispered: 'If you love me, mother,' he always called me mother, sort o' friendly like, ye see."

"Yes, yes; go on!"

"If you love me, mother, don't speak those words to me."

"And that was all?"

"Wasn't that enough?"

"And you didn't happen to notice the number of the cab?"

"Indeed I did not."

"Nor the horse, nor the driver?"

"The horse wasn't worth noticing, and as for the driver, I never notice him at all."

"Do you know him?"

"That I do, and mighty little good of him do I know."

"And what is his name?"

"Marty Mulvaney, the good-for-nothing. He keeps his vehicle and horse in the stable around the corner, and he keeps himself hanging 'round my door more than I like."

"Mr. Mulvaney is a bachelor, I take it?" ventured Bronson, who could not resist teasing her, even at the loss of a moment's time.

"He's worse than that—he's a widower."

"Ob! and he annoys you?"

"Whenever his horse is resting."

"I'll put a stop to that," said Bronson, gravely. "I'll arrest him and put him under bonds to keep away from you."

"Oh, sir; don't do that, sir! The poor man keeps out of mischief when he's here, and if he wasn't here he'd be in Haley's grog-shop, so don't disturb him."

"I won't, then," laughed the detective. "But when do you expect him back?"

"He drove his horse to the barn just before you came; he'll not be long in getting here. There he comes, now."

The figure that came around the corner was that of a descendant of the Irish kings without doubt—his bearing was royal in the extreme.

His face shone with a recent scrubbing, his cuffs were six inches wide below his coat-sleeve, his hat was carefully brushed, his coat spotless, his trowsers trim. His scarf was of vivid green, and he blushed with conscious pride.

He looked, and no doubt felt, a conqueror, as he stepped out to lay his daily siege to the heart of the comely landlady, who blushed distressingly as he approached.

As he came within earshot, Bronson spoke:

"Good-day, Mr. Mulvaney; what have you done with Mr. Lawrence?"

"Drowned him, sir, I think," was the reply.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. MULVANEY APPEARS.

THE landlady—Mrs. Conlay—gave a long scream and fell back into the hall on a chair.

"Drowned!" she cried, "Mr. Charles drowned! And only a short time ago he kissed me good-bye."

"He did, did he?" and Mr. Mulvaney's shake of the head was full of dire possibilities. "Kished those fair chakes that should be vargin to all imbraces but moine. Ah!"

The "ah!" was a combination of grunt and roar, and further indicated Marty's desire for revenge.

"An'," he continued, "if be kished you wider full consint an' approval, thin am I sorry in trut', in the bull trut', an' in nothin' but the trut', that he ain't drowned, r'aley an' trooly, instid of hypothetically an' sp'akin in the terms of metaphor, so to say. Whew!" And having delivered himself of this oration, Mr. Mulvaney ejected a long breath, spat vigorously and then, with his hat poised over his left ear, gazed with pity at the deceiving charmer in the hall.

She fanned herself vigorously, but deigned no reply, comprehending from her visitor's somewhat mixed speech, that Lawrence was not, in reality, drowned, but that something had occurred which, in due course of time, would be told.

The detective came to the rescue.

"What do you mean by your insinuations and your wanderings? Speak out, or I'll march you down to Ludlow street and leave Mrs.—"

He cast an inquiring look at the landlady.

"Mrs. Conlay, sir."

"Mrs. Conlay," echoed Mulvaney, "but only Mrs. Conlay for the prisint. Wid the sanction of State and the blessing of Church, this lady has consinted to subshitate the more appropriate cognomen of Mrs. Marty Mulvaney for the aforesaid."

"I don't know which to congratulate first," murmured Bronson, meditatively. He saw the kind of person that he had to deal with, and realized that flattery would accomplish more than force with the Irishman.

So he continued:

"On the one hand, youth and beauty; on the other, elegance and grace. What a coupling of all human accomplishments!"

Mulvaney swelled with pride until his vest buttons creaked.

"Sorr!" he began, and the rolling of his "r's" was like distant thunder. "Ye are a mon afther me own h'arrt; an' so long as you kape on that coarse, an' don't git afther the haart that b'ates for me beneath the fair form of Mrs. Mulvaney

in futuro—to be—I am your servent to command, sorr, and riddy to do and extind to you aany of those favours that can be elaborated bechune mon an' mon.

"Whew!"

And leaning far back, Mr. Mulvaney placed one hand beneath his coat, poised the other on his hip, and looked around for admiration.

To add that this was lavished on him by the adoring but coquettish Mrs. Conlay is superfluous.

"Thank you, sir," replied Bronson. "I trust you will honor me with an invitation to the wedding."

"Consider yourself so honored!" exclaimed Mulvaney, extending his hand, which was quickly grasped and shaken.

"And now, sor, phwt can I do fur you?" added the Irishman, becoming natural as much as he could.

"Where did you drive Mr. Lawrence this morning?"

"Do you ask that question as fri'nd or inemy?" demanded Mulvaney, on his guard at once.

"Entirely as friend; there is a conspiracy against him, I verily believe, and I wish to save him and capture the conspirators—something I can only do with your aid."

"A conspiracy, sor?"

"Yes; some one is trying to saddle a murder on him."

"Murder! He never killed no one, I'll shwear. Ah! I'll tell ye all I know."

"Do, and you'll help me wonderfully."

"This day, about noon, I was comin' home to feed."

"Your horse?" asked Mrs. Conlay.

"An' mesilf, too. Don't interrupt, darlin'! Fwhin I hear yer swate v'ice, chimin' in like a p'ale o' shweet-ringin' bells, I lose all ricollection of my idintity, and can only lishten?"

"I'm dumb," smiled Mrs. Conlay.

"Thank you, my shwate oyster. Fwhin I drove up to the shtable, Chaarley was waitin' fur me."

"Marty!" sez he.

"Pawat!" sez I.

"Are ye my fri'nd?" axes he.

"I am!" sez I.

"Then help me escape."

"I will. From who?"

"The police."

"Are they asther ye?" says I.

"Sharp an' fasht."

"Thin come on!" sez I, an' we stharterd for the cab door. But—"

"Howld on!" I sez. "I ain't goin' to help no man to get away from the law what is guilty. Air ye?"

"I shwear by my mother's grave that I'm not!" he said.

"I belave ye, me b'ye;" sez I; "come on."

"He jumped into the cab, I shut the dure, came here an' got his thrunk, and away we wint."

"This looks bad!" said the detective, "and I fear, my honest friend, that you've gotten yourself into trouble."

"Thrubble, sor?"

"Yes. You've aided a possibly guilty man to escape, and have thus become a confederate."

"Oh, Marty!" cried Mrs. Conlay; "I always knew you'd get into trouble through the goodness of your heart."

"I'm afraid," continued the detective, without paying any attention to the interruption, "that I will have to put you under arrest."

"You are an officer, sor!" cried the cabman, astonished.

"A detective."

"The saints be praised, thin! I hire ye to take charge of this case. Lawrence *versus* the police."

"I am sorry," smiled Bronson; "but I am already retained on the other side."

"That's too bad!" said the Irishman.

And then he added:

"Perhaps, sor, I kin help ye more on the outside than if ye lock me up."

"How?"

"By turning assistant detective."

This in the purest English, without a trace of brogue.

"Hello!" cried Bronson, "what's this?"

"A little masquerade Mrs. Conlay and I get up once in a while for the benefit of ourselves and our visitors, sir. Come in and sit down, and we'll tell you all about it."

Too much astonished to speak, the detective followed the other into the house, where Mrs. Conlay, scarcely able to suppress her laughter, dusted off a chair for him with her apron.

Then they all sat down, and Bronson learned the truth about matters.

"Marty Mulvaney," as he called himself, was in reality Mr. Conlay, who claimed Cincinnati as his home.

He had accumulated considerable money in the hotel business in his native city, had moved to New York and, having decided detective talent and liking for the profession, had become the secret agent of the French Government in New York.

His favorite disguise was that of Mulvaney, for as a cab-driver he could go anywhere and everywhere without exciting any suspicion.

He had gotten thus far when Bronson interrupted him:

"But Lawrence—what of him?"

"Oh, he's down on South Fifth avenue in a hotel. Do you want to see him?"

"I want to arrest him."

"Then I'll take you to him."

"Thank you; but one moment, first."

CHAPTER VII. THE QUARTET IS FORMED.

MR. CONLAY sat down again. "Do you know this man Lawrence, well?" It was the detective who spoke.

"Well? Very well. He is my nephew."

"Your nephew?"

"Yes; my sister's son. And I hope, sir, that before you arrest him you will give him a chance to explain."

Bronson was silent for a full minute. Then he asked:

"Do you know any one by the name of Warenne?"

"Warren?"

"No. Warenne: W-a-r-e-n-n-e. Henry Warenne."

"No; never heard the name before, to my recollection."

"Is your nephew a cabinet-maker?"

"Yes."

"And has he been in the city long?"

"No; he's only a lad. I knew when you spoke of murder that you'd confounded him with some one else."

"But he told you the police were after him, you said."

"And for that reason I drove him away. I wanted him to tell me all about it before they caught him, and did not want the boy locked up for nothin."

"And he told you?"

"Yes, the young rascal had been doing nothing more serious than buying pools on horse-races in a room that was raided. It was his 'first step in crime,' as he called it."

"He got away?"

"Yes, jumped out of a window on a policeman's back. The officer was knocked senseless, and Charley thought he had killed him. The boy had just won, and was excited anyhow."

"Then he came to you?"

"Yes, and I took him to a down-town hotel, kept by a friend. I thought at first that you wanted him, having recognized him in the pool-room."

"No indeed. It's a case of mistaken identity. I want a Charles Lawrence, who is a cabinet-maker, but not your boy."

"The charge is a serious one you say, sir?"

"Murder."

Conlay sat, thinking hard, for at least five minutes, his "Marty Mulvaney" face perspiring under his shining hat. Then he made a proposition:

"I don't know you, sir—"

"I am called Bronson, Cameron Bronson."

"And you married Mollie Fuller?" cried Mrs. Conlay.

"I did indeed."

"And her mother was my best friend ten years ago. I saw her wedding announced in the papers. Oh, I want to see her!"

"You shall, if Mr. Conlay—"

"Call me Mulvaney; I want you to get into the habit of it—for reasons."

"All right. Let's hear them—if Mrs. Conlay permits."

"Certainly. Business is first, always."

"Mr. Bronson," continued "Mulvaney," "I know you by reputation and I know that you have considerable influence. I want you to get my nephew out of his scrape."

"Why, they wouldn't have done anything to him, except that they might have taken his name and address, and detained him a little."

"Then that's all right. And if it isn't we'll get you to make it so."

"I can do that, easily, and will, of course."

"Thank you. And let me do something for you. Let me help you in this case. I don't want anything for my services. I like the work, and we don't—fortunately—need the pay."

"Gladly. You deceived me so completely that I am sure your services would be invaluable. I already have one recruit, and now accept one more."

"Two!" corrected Conlay. "My wife is equal, if not superior, to me."

"Who is the other?" asked Mrs. Conlay.

"Mollie—my wife."

"Splendid!" cried Conlay, "we'll all work together."

"And if Mrs. Conlay will come with us, we'll bring the quartet together at once."

"Certainly," said that lady, rising; "it won't take me a minute to get ready."

"And I'll get into my own togs," said Conlay. "I can't go to your house in this garb, so excuse us."

In a short time they reached the St. Cyr, and Bronson led the way to their rooms, where Mollie was waiting for him.

Mrs. Conlay greeted her warmly.

"And now," said Bronson, "we'll have a glass of wine to drink to the 'Detective Quartet'!"

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS LUCY DISAPPEARS.

"THE first thing to do, it seems to me, is to try and find Charles Lawrence—I mean the Charles Lawrence we want."

It was Bronson who spoke, after the quadrilateral had settled down to business.

"Let me see that note you found, Mr. Bronson, will you?" asked Conlay.

"Certainly," and the detective handed it to his new partner, who examined it carefully, holding it up to the light and turning and returning it in every direction.

Finally he said:

"Have you a magnifying-glass?"

"Assuredly."

"Lend it to me for a moment, please."

It was Mollie who found and handed him the glass.

Conlay took it and scrutinized the sheet under it, in the strongest light that he could find.

"Humph!" he muttered. "I thought so."

"What is it?" asked Bronson, interested in this possibly new development.

"Acid has been at work here, and the date has been erased."

"By George! you're right!" cried Bronson, taking glass and paper and looking intently at the spot indicated by Conlay. "What can this mean?"

"I'll make a guess, and then you can agree with me or not, as you see fit. The person who dropped that letter in the buffet was not a skillful forger. He could direct a letter in a handwriting that would resemble that on the enclosure."

"They do resemble each other."

"The resemblance is not very close, but as close as that existing between writing by the same hand on letter-sheet and envelope."

"Then you think they do differ?"

"In nine cases out of ten a man's writing changes when he directs an envelope. The person who 'lost' that letter in the buffet, mailed it to Mr. Warenne, but as the date on the note would not correspond to that on the post-mark, he found it easier to erase the old, than to write in a new date."

"You arrive at a conclusion with the quickness of Vidocq. 'Mulvaney,' and I—"

"'Mulvaney?'" asked Mollie, questioningly.

"Yes," explained her husband. "Mr. Conlay has an alias."

"Several of them, Mrs. Bronson; but that is my favorite."

"I'm half inclined to think your explanation the true one," continued Bronson; "but the motive?"

"A simple one. The sender argued that Mr. Warenne would either have that letter in his pocket, or would place it in his desk after reading it, where it could be found and then dropped as an additional piece of evidence against Lawrence."

"That seems plausible enough. I certainly would have respected Mr. Warenne's correspondence had I not found it where I did."

"Let Mrs. Conlay have the letter and the envelope. She is an expert at such matters, and is always called in by the courts at home when there is any doubt as to a person's signature."

Bronson did as requested and Mrs. Conlay began studying the writing carefully.

The two men walked to a window, and, in low tones, continued their conversation.

"I must tell you," said Bronson, "that we have two strings to our bow."

"And they are—?"

"Young Lawrence is one: the other is Miss Lucy Bryton, with whom he is in love."

"Who is she?"

"Mrs. Warenne's daughter; the late Mr. Warenne's step-daughter."

"And where is she?"

"I don't know, nor did the butler."

"Who does?"

"Her mother, probably."

"Didn't you ask her?"

"I couldn't, under the circumstances; I can to-morrow, or the next day. That is a matter that can wait."

"Certainly. But is it not rather singular that the butler did not know? You told me on the way up here that he was an old and trusted servant."

"It was strange; but the whole business partook so much of the same quality, that nothing struck me as being particularly odd at the time."

At that moment Mrs. Conlay called to her husband.

"Well?" he asked, going to her side, followed by Bronson.

"There are such radical differences between the two writings, that I have no hesitation in saying that they were written by two different persons."

"I thought as much."

"And there is another thing that struck me particularly."

"What is that?"

"The name on the envelope—'Henry Warenne'—is written as if the writer were in the habit of writing it. It looks more like a signature than anything else."

"It does indeed."

"Of course young Lawrence was in the habit of writing to his uncle frequently, and this may explain that."

"And may also explain the difference apparently existing between the two writings?"

"Of course."

"Then, Mrs. Conlay, you could not swear that they were not written by the same hand."

"No—I would not swear to it."

"A note for you, Cam," said his wife, who had answered a knock.

"Excuse me," said Bronson, as he opened it, and read.

"Phew!" he whistled; "listen: 'My dear sir: My daughter, Lucy, has disappeared. Please come up at once. Amanda Warenne,'"

CHAPTER IX.

AN ABDUCTION AND A KNOCK-DOWN.

THE party broke up hurriedly, Bronson going at once to see Warenne, and Conlay undertaking the attempt to find Lawrence.

"I should not be at all surprised if I came across the late Miss Lucy Bryton," said Conlay, as he turned to go.

"The late; what do you mean?"

"That by this time she is doubtless Mrs. Charles Lawrence; that would explain her disappearance."

"Not entirely. From all I could gather the mother did not oppose the match, and I think Miss Bryton would have written her mother before taking such a step as the one you mention."

"Possibly. But we'll see. Good-night."

"Come, little girl," said "Cam," when the Conlays had gone, "I'm not going to leave you alone any more this day. We'll get something to eat, and then you can go up to Mrs. Warenne's."

"Thank you, Cam," she replied. "It's good of you."

"Selfish, you mean."

A couple of hours later Bronson was admitted to the Warenne house.

He found the widow expecting him, and waiting for him in the parlor.

She was quiet, but bore traces of her great grief, and the tears that had been caused by it.

Mrs. Warenne placed the detective in possession of what facts she had regarding her daughter's disappearance, in a few words.

Miss Bryton had been visiting friends, and was to have returned home two days before, but had telegraphed that she was going to stop en route.

Where, she did not say, only stating that in two days' time from that day she would be at home.

The two days had elapsed, and she had not appeared, and a telegram had just arrived from the friends she had first visited, asking if she had reached home safely, and stating that she had left there a week before.

These friends lived in Saratoga Springs, and their dispatch came from there.

Just as Mrs. Warenne finished, the door-bell rung, and, it being opened, a young man hurried into the parlor.

"My dear aunt!" he cried, "I have only just heard of your great trouble, of our great loss. Is it true?"

"It is only too true, Henry," replied Mrs. Warenne, somewhat coldly, Bronson thought, and giving him her hand, instead of the evidently-expected cheek.

"Poor uncle! but I see you have visitors; I'll wait in the dining-room until you are at liberty."

"No, remain. Perhaps you can aid us. Mr. Bronson, this is my nephew—or rather my late husband's nephew—Mr. Henry Warenne, Jr. Mrs. Bronson, will you let me present him?"

The two visitors bowed and Bronson eyed the new-comer closely.

"I'll have your signature, my shifty young friend, before I am many hours older," he thought.

And Mr. Henry Warenne certainly deserved to be called "shifty," for his roving, restless eyes never for a moment encountered those of any one else.

"Mr. Bronson is in business in the city aunt?" he asked.

But before she could reply the detective answered:

"Yes—if it can be called business, Mr. Warenne. I am a detective, and just now I am looking for two persons."

"Two? I thought detectives always had at least a dozen persons under search."

"Not always, as you see."

"And is Mrs. Bronson aiding you?"

"She will, I hope, later. Just now she is not very familiar with the work."

Mrs. Warenne evidently wished to turn the conversation, for she spoke to Mollie.

"Did you say, to-day, dear, that you had been married but a month?"

"A month to-day, yes."

"Excuse me, aunt, for interrupting," broke in Warenne; "but I am curious to know who Mr. Bronson is looking for, and how his search brings him here."

"I am looking for Miss Lucy Bryton, Mr. Warenne, and for the murderer of your uncle."

"And I hope your search may be successful; but you surely don't expect to find them in one and the same person, do you?"

"That I will tell you later."

"What does Mr. Bronson mean by saying he is looking for Lucy; is she not at home?"

"She left Saratoga a week ago, and yet sent me a dispatch from there two days ago, saying that she would be at home to-day."

"I will go at once and send a message to Saratoga," said the young man, rising, "if Mr. and Mrs. Bronson will excuse me."

"Certainly," answered Cam, for both. "But, Mr. Warenne, I shall want to see you frequently, and would be glad if you would favor me with your address."

"See me?"

"Certainly, you will want to act for your aunt in this matter, will you not?"

"Of course," and the nephew and namesake of the murdered man laughed uneasily. "I'll give you one of my cards—here it is."

"Thank you," said Bronson, taking it, and returning Warenne's bow, as the latter went out.

As the front door closed after him, Mrs. Warenne gave a deep sigh.

"He is Mr. Warenne's namesake, nephew and heir, yet I never could like him."

"May I ask you why not?" inquired the detective.

"That I can not say. He was devoted to Mr. Warenne, but—well, he was and is in love with Lucy, and Mr. Warenne urged his suit."

"And you favored Mr. Lawrence's, I see."

"Cam!" came warningly from Mollie.

But Mrs. Warenne replied:

"He is right, Mrs. Bronson. He must and shall know everything. He must not be hampered in his search, and, tell me, sir, have you any suspicions?"

"None of sufficient importance to mention, madam. I am working in the dark as yet."

"Find my girl, first, Mr. Bronson, then track down my husband's murderer, and all I have is yours."

"Thank you, madam; even without that statement, though, I would have done my best. And now I will go—I think to Saratoga, to-night, and will work from that end."

As they walked down the street a carriage, returning from up-town, passed them.

"Carriage, sir?" asked the driver.

"Yes," and as the vehicle drove up to the curb and stopped, Cam opened the door.

At that second Mollie was dragged inside, Cam knocked senseless, and away the carriage

flew, the door being banged to, and the coachman lashing his horses to a run."

The street was almost deserted, and the attention of nobody was attracted in that direction.

The carriage disappeared, and Bronson lay close to the curb, where he had fallen.

But presently a man, walking hurriedly, came in that direction, and seeing the prone figure, stopped, bent over and examined it.

"Dead, or—drunk?" he muttered, as he struck a match, and flared the light in the face of the prostrate man.

"Bronson, by thunder!" he ejaculated, and he bent his energies toward reviving the detective, who soon recovered consciousness.

His hat had broken the blow, and he was only stunned.

As he staggered to his feet, he recognized, in the man who was helping him, his acquaintance of a few minutes before—Henry Warenne.

"Are you all right now?" asked the latter, as Bronson thanked him.

"Oh, yes!" And then he spoke again: "That is—I think not!" and fainted.

CHAPTER X.

CONLAY FIGURES IT OUT.

WHEN Bronson recovered consciousness, he found himself in bed, and his friend, the butler, bending over him.

"Where am I?" he asked, as he raised himself on his elbow.

"Safe in Mrs. Warenne's house, sir. You're to keep still, and ask no questions."

Bronson ignored this.

"Is it to-day or yesterday?" he asked.

"I hardly understand, sir."

"Was it on yesterday that I called to see the house, and found your master dead in his chair, or to day?"

"Bless you, sir! that was a week ago."

"What?" and Bronson's voice rose to a shriek.

"You must not do that, sir!" expostulated the servant. "The doctor says as how you mustn't get excited."

"Do you mean to say that I've been lying here a week?"

"I do, sir."

"And my wife?"

"I don't know nothing about her, sir."

"Hasn't any one been here to see me?"

"Only a gent as called himself—let me see—his card is here somewhere."

"Was it Conlay?"

"That was it, yes, sir. He asked after your wife, too; but we couldn't tell him anything."

"Where are my clothes?"

"Surely, sir, you're not going to get up."

"I am that."

"But the doctor, sir?"

"Hang the doctor; give me my clothes."

And in spite of the butler's protests, Cam rose, and, with some difficulty dressed himself.

Then he made his way down stairs, where he asked for Mrs. Warenne.

"My dear madam," he said, as soon as he entered the room, "I thank you for your hospitality and care, and only wanted to see you to say that and good-bye."

"But, Mr. Bronson," said she, "you surely are in no condition to leave here yet."

"I am very weak, Mrs. Warenne, but were I unable to walk, I would insist on being carried to my hotel."

"But why this haste?"

"Because the night I was knocked senseless, my wife was carried off."

"Impossible!"

"Not only possible, but true."

"I wondered where she was, but had so much to think of—"

"So, you see, I can not be blamed for leaving here."

"No, I will not even attempt to detain you."

"One word more: Have you heard anything from your daughter?"

"Not a word, and once you have found your wife—"

"I will find Miss Bryton—be assured of that."

"Thank you, sir! I know it."

"Is your nephew in?"

"No; it is not yet time for his daily visit."

"He calls every day, does he?"

"Yes, he has been most solicitous about you, and has not missed a day since you were hurt."

"That is very kind of him. Now, Mrs. Warenne, I want you to do me a favor."

"A hundred, sir."

"One will do: when your nephew comes, do not let him know that I have gone; let him think that I am still up-stairs."

"May I ask your reason?"

"Why not? I do not want any one to learn that I am out again. News travels fast, and my wife's abductors would soon learn that I had recovered."

"I see."

"So long as they think that I am confined to my room, just so long will they be less careful."

"I will do as you wish, sir, and instruct my servant to do the same. No one has seen you except the doctor and the butler, and I will speak to them."

"Thank you a thousand times, Mrs. Warenne. And now if you will see that the coast is clear, I will go."

"Mrs. Warenne preceded Bronson to the door, looked up and down the street, and, seeing no sign of her nephew, gave him the word."

In a short time the detective was on an elevated train and being whirled rapidly south.

It did not take him long to reach his hotel, when he sent a telegram to Conlay, and then spoke to the clerk.

"I am not here, you understand. A gentleman will call soon and show you a dispatch from me. To him I am here, but to no one else."

"Very well, sir," replied the clerk, who knew Bronson well, and who asked no questions.

So, taking his key the detective went up stairs to his room, unlocked and opened the door and entered the little parlor, where everything recalled Mollie.

It was only after he had looked on the table and piano, and then on his dressing-case, that he admitted to himself that he had cherished a faint hope that there might be a note there from his wife.

But he found nothing, and sick, weak, tired, despondent, he threw himself on the sofa and buried his face in his hands. How long he lay there he did not know, but he was roused from his reverie by a knock at the door.

He opened it, and found Conlay standing outside.

"Come in!" he cried, "and thank you for coming so promptly."

"What's up?" asked Conlay, "and what the deuce have they been doing to you?"

Conlay told him all.

Conlay sat down and thought for fully half an hour, without saying a word.

"I have it!" he said, finally.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. WARENNE GOES AWAY.

"WHAT is it—what is your explanation of this business?" asked Bronson.

"I'll tell you when you've made me a promise—one that you'll keep faithfully."

"All right; I know you wouldn't ask me anything unreasonable, so I promise to do whatever you ask—if I can."

"I won't ask much, only that you go to bed when I leave you and get a good night's sleep, while I work."

"I'll go to bed fast enough; but as for the sleeping part I'm not so sure."

"Well, you can try; and now that I have your promise, I'll keep mine."

"All right—go ahead."

"I think that the same person, or persons, carried off your wife who abducted Miss Bryton."

"And your reasons?"

"That you may be induced to give up the search for Miss Bryton so as to take up that for Mrs. Bronson."

"That seems plausible—but—"

"But what?"

"In order to be posted regarding my connection with the case, they must have, or have had, an accomplice in the house."

"Well?"

"Who is it?"

"Well, if you want me to make a haphazard guess, I will."

"If this were a horse-race, and you were about to guess the winner, I'd bet on your 'guess.'"

"Thank you."

"But you need not, I've thought of the same person."

"You have?"

"I think so."

"And who is the person?"

"Henry Warenne, Jr."

"He's the man."

"Shadow him, Conlay; I beg you, until I am able to do it, and in him I firmly believe that we will find three persons."

"The abductor of Lucy Bryton, the kidnapper of Mrs. Bronson and—"

"And the murderer of Henry Warenne," and in his excitement and weakness, that made him

forgetful, Bronson raised his voice higher than was prudent.

There came a knock at the door, and before Bronson could reply or Conlay reach it, the knob was turned, the door swung open, and in walked—Henry Warenne!

"Excuse me," he said, smiling and bowing, "I hope I do not intrude. I was passing your door—"

"Listening there, you mean!" cried Cam, hotly.

"Pardon me, passing it, I said," replied his visitor coolly, "and, hearing my name mentioned, I took the liberty of learning who was making so free with it."

"Mr. Warenne," said Bronson, collecting himself, "let me introduce you to my friend Mr. Conlay."

"Delighted to meet Mr. Conlay," said the new-comer, and the two men shook hands as Bronson motioned to a chair.

"Sit down, sir," he said. "Mr. Conlay was talking about the sad affair of a week ago, and I was just speaking of the murder as you passed."

"I called at my aunt's house a short time ago, and, having a latch-key, let myself in and went right to your room, which I found vacant."

"And then came here?"

"I am living here."

"Ah! I did not know that you and I lived under the same roof."

"I have only just moved in; my tenancy only dates from to-day."

"Then I hope to see much of you!" cried Cam, cordially.

"The wish is mutual," and Warenne bowed.

"Mr. Warenne," broke in Conlay, "do you know Mr. Lawrence?"

"Charley Lawrence?"

"Yes."

"Well, I should say that I did. Charley and I are cousins, and as intimate as—well as brothers."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Haven't seen him for a week."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"N-n-o," the answer came slowly. "The last time I saw him he said that he was going to move into new quarters, and he promised to send me his address."

"And did not?"

"I have not received it."

"Where does he work?"

"I never asked him—I knew him as a gentleman, not as a workman."

"Are the two occupations incompatible?"

"Yes, most certainly."

"Mr. Warenne," said Conlay, rising and taking his hat, "if you will excuse me I will go home."

"Certainly," replied Warenne, "if you must go."

"Sorry to lose you so early," said Bronson, rising. "Come up to-morrow."

Bronson escorted Conlay to the door, where they separated with a hand-shake, Bronson returning to his visitor, while Conlay went on down-stairs.

"Can I offer you a cigar?" asked the detective, as he sat down.

"If Mrs. Bronson does not object."

"Mrs. Bronson is not in, this evening, and even were she here, would not, I know."

"Then," said Warenne, taking a cigar and lighting it, "Mrs. Bronson is out of town?"

"Yes," replied Bronson, slowly, "Mrs. Bronson is out of town."

"And—if I am not too curious—when does she return?"

"You, Mr. Warenne, can, just now, answer that question better than I."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, that you are playing a desperate game, and are playing it well, I admit that."

"Thank you!" interrupted Warenne, sneeringly. "But I don't understand what you mean."

"Yes, you do!" cried Bronson, who, weak as he was, could not restrain himself at the thought that his wife had been abducted, he nearly murdered, by that handsome fiend sitting there; "you understand only too well what I mean. You are playing a tremendous game, and I am your opponent!"

"And what are the stakes?" quietly asked Warenne, examining the tip of his cigar.

"Your life—for the murder of your uncle; your liberty—for the abduction of Miss Bryton?"

"Is that all?"

"No!" and the detective leaped to his feet.

But his strength was only fictitious; it gave out, and Bronson fell back, gasping.

"If you will excite yourself, my dear fellow,"

exclaimed Warenne, "you must expect bad effects."

"Leave me!" whispered the detective. "Don't stand there taunting me, or, as Heaven is my judge, I'll shoot you where you stand."

"Certainly I will go," replied Warenne. "I am only a guest in your room, and—"

Bronson pointed to the door, and, without further speech, Warenne opened it, disappeared, and closed the door behind him.

Bronson locked it, took a drink of brandy, and, going to bed, was soon in a sound sleep, from which he did not waken until a late hour the next morning.

When he went into the parlor, feeling comparatively well and strong, he saw something white under the door, which he picked up.

It was an envelope, addressed to him, and contained the following inclosure:

"MY DEAR MR. BRONSON: I am going away for a few days, and hope on my return, to find you in a better humor than last night. I attribute your ill-humor to your weakness, and assure you that I have no ill-feeling toward you."

And this document was signed "Henry Warenne, Jr."

"Gone!" cried Bronson, "and I've let him escape me!"

CHAPTER XII.

MULVANEY'S PASSENGERS.

WHEN Conlay went down-stairs, he stopped for a moment in the office, to glance at the register, and as he did so, the clerk, who had been busy at the cashier's desk, turned, saw him, and called out:

"Well!" he cried. "Where on earth did you spring from?"

Conlay looked up, and in a moment the two had locked hands.

"Why, Wally, my boy, I've not seen you since you were head bell-boy in the old Cincinnati House."

"Nor I you, Mr. Conlay," replied Wally. "But, I tell you I'm mighty glad to meet you once more. You must come in and have a bottle of wine with me for old times' sake. I've not forgotten how good you were to me out in old Porkopolis."

Wally's relief came on just then, and Conlay and his former employee were soon seated in the office, enjoying their wine.

Their conversation grew more and more confidential, the result being that the proprietor of the house was finally sent for and introduced.

"Certainly," he replied, when Conlay's request and its motive had been made clear to him; "I'll do that and anything more in my power, Mr. Conlay."

It was not long after that the trio separated, Conlay leaving the house and going straight home, for it was late.

But the result of the conference between Wally, the proprietor and Conlay was easily discernible the next morning when Warenne came down-stairs, sachel in hand, stopped at the desk, paid his bill and ordered a carriage—"not a cab," he said distinctly.

In a moment the team stopped at the door, and, as Warenne came out and lingered a moment to hand the porter, who carried his trunk, a quarter, it was our old friend, Marty Mulvaney, who was arranging something about the harness; and as Warenne stepped into the vehicle it was Mulvaney who closed the door and waited at the open window for directions.

"My man," said Warenne, in a loud voice, "do you know where Cottage Place is?"

"Do Oi!" said Marty. "Don't Oi! Did not me poor ould mither—the saints rest her soul in Paradise, she's been dead these twenty year—didn't she useter kape the linen an' the other good of one o' the bist blooded families in the whole strato as clane an' shwate as the new-mown hay?"

"Didn't she—"

"Well, never mind that," interrupted Warenne, impatiently. "Drive there and don't waste all day talking."

"An' at phwat number would yer' Hon'or loike to shtop?"

"I don't know; I'll point out the house when we get there."

"All roight, sor; I'll take ye there in the whiff o' a poipe."

And in a moment Marty was on the box and the horses had started off at a smart trot.

But as they crossed Fourteenth street, at Fifth avenue, Warenne leaned from the window and called out.

Mulvaney drew up, and waited.

"I don't want to go to Cottage Place," said Warenne; "drive me to Sixth avenue, and up there. I'll tell you where to stop."

"A'l right, sor," replied Marty, as he turned and drove in the designated direction.

And as he drove he thought:

"Your first direction was only a blind, in case any one heard you and reported to Bronson."

"Never mind; I'll tell him all about it, later."

And Marty doubled up with laughter, forgetting himself for a moment, and nearly running into a street car.

But the driver whipped up, cursed Mulvaney, and brought him to his senses, so that no further incident occurred until they were near Twenty-third street, where Warenne again stopped him.

Marty drew up in front of a saloon, according to orders, jumped down and opened the door.

"I am going in here," said Warenne, as he stepped out, "to get a drink. Will you have one?"

"That will Oi, sorr. I howld it's no harrum to a man's intarnal arrangements, or to his extarnal exterior, if he teks a drop or two of the cr'atur' phwin nature directs, your pocket consints, or you be invoited."

Their liquor disposed of, Warenne, after paying, said:

"I have two passengers at a boarding-house near here, for the New Orleans steamer. Their trunks have gone by Dodd's Express. We will go and get the ladies now, and then you will drive them to the pier; I'll join you there afterward, and pay you."

"All right, sorr," replied Mulvaney, getting on the box. "Where to now?"

"Down Twenty-eighth street; I'll tell you when to stop."

It was an unpretentious brick house in front of which Mulvaney drew up, and which Warenne entered.

In a moment he reappeared, followed by three women, the first two closely veiled, the other, evidently the landlady, bareheaded.

Ushered into the carriage by Warenne, who carried their hand-baggage, the two veiled women entered.

He called out "All right!" to Mulvaney, and returned to the house, followed by the landlady.

Mulvaney whipped up his horses, and the carriage dashed off down the street, bearing the two passengers, as well as Warenne's baggage.

Bronson was sitting in his room, wondering why on earth his friend Conlay did not appear, when there came a rap on the door.

"Come in!" cried Bronson.

The door opened and Marty Mulvaney whip in hand, stepped in.

"Ah, Conlay!" began Bronson, when the other stopped him.

"Phwist!" he whispered, "fwhere's your mimory? D'ye moind that Oi'm Marty Mulvaney, keb-driver?"

"Well, well," ejaculated Bronson, "there's no one to hear; what harm can it possibly do?"

"Ye kan't tell. But I'll not kape ye ahny longer in suspince as to the raison av me visit. Oi've a visitor out here fur ye—two av them."

"A visitor?" asked Bronson, and he half rose.

But before he stood erect the door burst open, a woman entered and threw herself into Bronson's arms.

"Cam!" she cried.

It was Mollie, his wife.

Mulvaney looked at the couple, sniffed suspiciously once or twice, and then stepped into the hall and closed the door.

A lady stood there, waiting.

"Oi'll give them wan minnit," said Mulvaney, "in flich to recooperate, an' thin Oi'll knock wance moar!"

She made no reply, but trembled so violently that she had to lean against the wall for support.

Seeing this, Mulvaney knocked.

"Oi'll wait no longer!" said he.

Bronson opened the door at once.

"Come in! my good friend!" he cried, as he grasped Mulvaney's hand.

And then, as he saw his companion, he continued:

"But who is this?"

"Some one in sore n'aide of a drap o' brandy, an' ye have it."

Mollie came to the door.

"Oh, how selfish happiness is!" she exclaimed.

"I had forgotten all about her."

She flew to the lady's side, took her hand, passed her arm about her waist, and led her into the room.

"Come, dear," she said, "you are safe here."

She seated her on the sofa.

"Who is she?" asked Cam, of Mulvaney.

"Mish Loocy Bryton," he replied.

CHAPTER XIII.

BRONSON GOES SOUTH.

"SHE has been very ill," said Mollie, as she bent over the sick girl, "and is now scarcely able to stand."

"And where have you been all this time, Mollie?" asked Cam.

"A close prisoner in a house on—I do not know what street."

"Twenty-ate," prompted Mulvaney.

"I have been kept there with Lucy, ever since I was carried away."

"By whom?"

"By Henry Warenne, of course."

"I thought so. But his object?"

"Heaven only knows. He was trying to force Lucy to marry him, but when he saw how that close imprisonment was telling on her, he grew frightened."

"And released you?"

"Only partly. He made us swear that we would not attempt to escape, and assured us of the kindest treatment."

"Well?"

"Of course I did not consider such an oath binding, and had determined to jump from the carriage as soon as we were out of sight of the house, but—"

"Oh, there is a 'but'; what is it?"

"Lucy."

"Oh, I see!"

"In her weak state I could not leave her; I dared ask no aid from the driver—not knowing it was Mr. Conlay," and she smiled on him.

"Mulvaneey," corrected that worthy, with a grin.

"Judge of my surprise, then, when, as soon as we had turned the corner, the carriage stopped and Mr. Con—Mulvaneey spoke to me."

"What is it?" I asked.

"And when he told me he was going to take me straight to you—oh, Cam, Cam!"

And the poor girl burst out crying; the strain was too much for her.

"Where were you told to take them?" Cam asked, when she grew quieter.

"To the Noo Orleans bote," replied Mulvaneey.

"Ah! He was going to leave the city with them, was he?"

"He not only wuz," said Mulvaneey, but he is!"

"What do you mean?"

"Jist phwat Oi say."

"I don't understand."

"Thin Oi'll explain clarely and succinctly, Mishter Warenne, bad 'cess ter him, is goin' to Noo Orleans—ph?"

"I don't know."

"No more do Oi. But we'll find out—how? By shtoppin' his trip? No; by goin' wid him."

"You and I?"

"No; you an' the two leddies. Me an' Mishtress Mulvaneey 'll shtay here an' kape watch on this ind of the loine, an' if the sarcum-vintu' raskil attempts annything here—here we are."

"It's true if he goes to the boat and don't find the girls there he'll suspect something."

"Yis; he'd shmeell a rat as big as a Connaught colt."

"While, if we go with him—"

"You'll catch a waysel ashlafe."

"Right you are, Mulvaneey, and we'll go—if Miss Bryton consents."

"I can not, sir!" she cried, "my mother, my—she stopped, blushed, and buried her face in her hands.

"But, Miss Bryton," exclaimed Cam, stepping toward her, "do you not see how important it is?"

"You'll trun Warenne off'n his gyard," added Mulvaneey, "an' inable me to prove the innocence of Mishter Chaarles Larrince."

"Oh, you think so!" and Lucy sprung up and looked at Mulvaneey as if she would read his soul.

"Indade, an' I know it. Lave me and Missus Mulvaneey alone fur that."

"Then I'll go, at once. Come, we must reach the boat before he does, or it will ruin everything."

"Now ye're talkin', miss. An' I'll sp'ake to yer mother, so don't worry."

"I won't! Come!"

"Yes, come!" cried Mollie, equally excited.

"But, Mollie," interrupted her husband, "your things!"

"Oh," she replied, laughing, "I've been sharin' Lucy's; we're about the same size. But I can pack a few necessaries in five minutes, if Mr. Mulvaneey will give me the time."

"Tin, ma'm, af ye wish. The bote don't sail

till foive, an' that'll give ye lashin's o' time. I don't belave his job-lots 'll hurry to go there."

In much less than the allotted time, however, Mollie came from her room and joined the trio in the little parlor.

And a few moments after the carriage disappeared around the corner, leaving Bronson looking out of the window after it.

Mulvaneey drove straight to the pier and deposited his load, and then, going on board, he learned that Warenne had not yet put in an appearance.

"That's lucky!" he soliloquized, and, returning to his team, he drove away, going back to the stable of the hotel and then home, where he related to Mrs. Mulvaneey—or Conlay—every thing that had happened.

"It was a lucky thought that suggested their going on board," said she, when they were seated at lunch, Mulvaneey having once more become Detective Conlay.

"It was the only thing to do," he replied, "for Warenne is a smart one, and we will have to watch him mighty close."

"In what character is Bronson going, do you know?" she asked.

"I did not inquire. I think, though, I'll go over to the pier about sailing time, and if he has anything to say it'll give him a chance."

"Do," she said; "but let me suggest one thing."

"Well?"

"Don't go as you are; go as Mulvaneey, looking for Mr. Warenne—and your pay."

"Phew!" he whistled, "to think that I clean forgot all about that. He'd know something was wrong, sure—unless he thinks it's charged at the hotel."

"Certainly he will. Go as some one else, for some of the ladies might forget and speak to you."

"All right. I'll go incognito."

It was getting on toward the hour of sailing, and all was bustle and apparent confusion on board of the steamer.

The last loads of freight were arriving and a long line of trucks barred the way.

A cab, driven at full speed, came down one of the side streets and drew up at the corner.

The occupant looked out.

"Can't git no furder, boss," said the driver, pointing to the blockade with his whip.

"All O. K., I'll walk over. How much?"

"Two dollars."

"Well, here's a quarter extra in which to drink my health."

"Thank yer Honor."

"You're welcome, I'm sure," and the speaker, sachel in hand, after waiting a moment, darted across the street, threading his way in a manner that bespoke long acquaintance with the streets of the city.

"Mebbe he's from the South, an' mebbe he hain't. Annyhow he's gi'n me an exiry quarter, an' I'll jes' go in yer an' git a taste o' old ale."

And the driver disappeared behind the swinging doors of a saloon.

At the gangway a couple of policemen were busy; one short and thin; the other tall and stout, evidently a German.

As the Southerner came rapidly toward them, Warenne appeared.

The Southerner saw him and immediately stopped to buy a paper.

The German policeman stepped up to him and said, quietly:

"Take off that ring, Bronson."

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. WARENNE IS HASTY.

THE detective's self-control was something wonderful, yet he almost dropped the purse he held when the policeman spoke to him.

But he quickly recovered his nerve, and paid for the paper, while the policeman walked away toward the end of the pier.

Meantime Warenne had crossed the gangway and disappeared.

The Southerner placed his sachel at his feet, and folded his paper.

When the operation was completed, he put it in his pocket, and when his hand reappeared no ring shone on his finger. He had taken the advice of the tall policeman.

In turn he went on board the steamer, but only to check his sachel at the coat-room, for he quickly reappeared without it, looked hurriedly around and walked behind a pile of incoming freight, that had not been removed, and where the German policeman awaited him.

"Thank you, Conlay," said Bronson, as he came within earshot.

"For nothing. It was an oversight excusable in your weak condition."

"It was inexcusable."

"Oh, no. But Warenne might have seen the ring on your finger and remembered it."

"Then you think that without it, he won't know me?"

"I am sure of it. Part of my business is to penetrate disguises, but if it had not been for that curious ring I certainly should not have recognized you."

"And I certainly was never more surprised in my life than when you spoke to me. I took you for a member of 'the Finest.'"

"And so I am—when I want to be. I have full permission to wear this uniform whenever I please."

"And to make arrests?"

"Yes."

"Then, if you wished you could go on board that steamer and arrest Harry Warenne for abduction."

"Certainly. But as we think him guilty of the graver crime of murder, yet have no proof, it is better to let him go free for the present, in the hope that he will commit himself later on."

"Yes, and furnish the proofs that are now totally wanting."

"And it rests with you to obtain those proofs."

"Yes, sah," and Bronson's voice drawled out in the intonation of Louisiana. "And it is fo' that reason, sah, that I em 'bout returning to my plawntation, sah."

"Und I hopes as you vill haf a most bleasart churney. Goot-pye, und goot loke!"

"Thanks!" and the Southerner turned and walked toward the gangway, and went on board, while the policeman, a moment later, resumed his former position.

He had stood there but a few minutes, when Warenne appeared, hurrying toward him, and when within speaking distance he spoke:

"Officer, I want you to come on board the steamer. A woman there has stolen my sachel, and I wish her arrested."

"Vell," replied the "German" slowly, "I donno 'bout dot. Oph, oph I images der arrest, und dere vas no one to maig a complaint, v'ot v'ill der judge say to me?"

"I know, und, py jiminy krouts, I know too vell."

"He'll say: 'Hans!—dot vos me, dot Hans—Hans!'

"Und I vill say: 'Vell?'

"Und der judge vill say: 'Nein, it is not vell!'

"Und do you know v'ot vill happen?"

"Come, come, my man, don't waste any more time," cried Warenne, impatiently, "the boat's time is nearly up, and if you don't make the arrest now, you never will."

"That's exactly what I am figuring on," thought Conlay, as he puzzled his brain in vain conjectures as to what this new move on Warenne's part might mean.

"Some scheme to separate Mrs. Bronson and Miss Bryton," he decided, as he replied:

"Of I arrest dis young leddy, den must I also, yust der same, hold you as a witness. So gom along."

"Hold on!" said Warenne. "That would never do; I must sail to-night."

"Den I kin do nottiks."

"It looks as though you couldn't, or wouldn't; perhaps, however, your partner might."

"Dry i.n." was the German's only response, and Warenne crossed over to where the short and thin policeman stood idly twirling his club.

"It luks to me like a case of abductshun an' kidnappin'," he replied, "an' Oi've moré'n half a moind to run yez in. But af yez'll git out av me soight an' lave me in p'ace to continue me miditations on the buk of Ignaashus Donnelly, me namesake, Oi'll let yez escape, an' niver say a word."

It is probably needless to remark, here, that the short and thin Irish policeman had been "posted," long before, by the tall and stout German one.

Warenne, at the words "abduction and kidnapping," had started and turned pale; but he collected himself, and, drawing out note-book and pencil, he quietly took the policeman's number, remarking as he did so:

"All right, my fine fellow; but I'll just report you at Headquarters, and we'll see what the commissioners will do in your case."

And then he went on board again, and was seen no more.

But the Irishman was uneasy. He walked over to his German friend and told him what Warenne had done and what he had threatened.

"Och, Himmel!" ejaculated his companion, "let him rebort. Of he does dot, he'll gif him-

self ted avav, und doan' you forgot to regall it! Ain't dot so?"

"But av Oi'm foired from off the foorce—" began the Irishman, when the other interrupted.

"Shoos! you led dot hen set. Doan' you worry, an' I bromise you dot you vill not pe firet for dot pizness, no, so long as my name vas—Conlay."

The last word was whispered, and instantly an expression of relief chased the one of perplexity from the Irishman's face.

"Oh!" he smiled, "av it's you—"

"Vell, it am, so shut."

And the two resumed their stations.

Meantime Warene had returned to the cabin, or saloon, of the steamer and had rapped on the door of one of the state-rooms.

It was opened by Mollie, who held her finger up, warningly.

"Hush!" she whispered, "Miss Bryton is asleep."

"I don't care for that!" he replied, roughly, "I want my sachel that you took from the table where I left it."

"Your sachel!"

"Yes; and it contains some valuables that money could not replace."

"I do not know what you are talking about."

"Oh, yes you do. And I advise you to give it up, and to go ashore, or else I will have to get an officer to arrest you."

"What do you mean?" she said, stepping outside and closing the door so as not to disturb Lucy.

"Is this some new change in your plans? one made so that you can get Miss Bryton away from her friends?

"I tell you I will not go and leave her helpless."

"You will not?"

"No, I will not."

"Then you sleep in the station-house to-night."

"I shall sleep in that state-room."

"And I say you will not. Come, I will march you outside and—" he laid his hand on her arm.

At the same instant he was seized by the collar and flung clean across the cabin.

CHAPTER XV.

CONLAY IS RECOGNIZED.

WHEN Policeman Hans returned to his home and once more appeared in the garb of Detective Conlay, he told his wife everything that had occurred, like a good and dutiful husband.

"And what are you going to do next?" asked his better-half.

"I'm going to try and find young Lawrence. I do not believe that the police have arrested him yet."

"And you are going to?"

"First catch your hare," is an excellent maxim."

"And 'courtesy costs nothing,' is another excellent one."

"True, my dear. So give me a cup of your excellent tea, and I'll tell you exactly what I propose to do."

Somewhat mollified, Mrs. Conlay prepared the tea, and long before their evening meal was finished, they were on the best of terms again.

So when Conlay left the house, the wish—expressed—followed him that his duties might not keep him out late.

He had learned, through the papers, of an impending strike among the cabinet-makers of the city, and of a meeting in relation thereto, that was to be held that night.

He knew that the meeting was to be a secret one, but hoped either to learn something concerning Lawrence from some of the men outside the hall, or that he might be able to slip inside and pursue his investigations there.

So he strolled leisurely along toward the place of meeting, and reached there a few minutes before eight o'clock.

Knots of men stood about talking, and every now and then some of them would disappear upstairs.

Conlay waited, hoping to see his nephew, to whom Mrs. Conlay had conveyed the welcome information that he might venture out in safety.

But eight o'clock struck, the last of the men went inside, and Conlay was just about to inquire of the doorkeeper, who stepped out to see if there were any more coming, when he was hailed:

"Hello! I didn't expect to see you here, uncle."

"Well, I did expect to see you, and was waiting for you," said Conlay to his nephew—for it was he—as he linked arms with him and walked toward the door.

The man in charge, knowing Lawrence and hearing him call Conlay "uncle," concluded that

it was all right, and allowed them to pass without question.

And as for young Lawrence, he was so eagerly engaged in telling his uncle how he had passed the days of his imprisonment that he had no thought of what he was doing until they had seated themselves in the large room where the meeting was to be held.

But suddenly he realized his position.

"For Heaven's sake be careful!" he whispered to his uncle.

"What's up?"

"There are some men here to-night who are all but desperate, and if they thought there were any outsiders here—"

"Well?"

"They put them down as spies."

"And the result would not be altogether pleasant for me."

"Quite the reverse."

"Then suppose I get out?"

A man who had risen a moment before and rapped for order spoke at that moment:

"Lock the doors," he said, "admit no one; allow no one to leave the hall."

"It's too late!" cried Charlie.

"Never mind," added his uncle reassuringly,

"I won't tell on you."

"Is that a promise?"

"A sacred one."

"Then we'll keep still and hope for the best."

The chairman continued:

"All of the doings at our former meetings have been reported to the bosses, and, in some instances, reported in the papers."

"Now, one of two things."

"What are they?" cried a brawny, half-intoxicated attendant, from the center of the hall.

"Either we have traitors among us—"

"Yes—and the other?"

"Or spies."

"If there be traitors here," said the giant, springing on a chair, "we'll brain 'em, won't we boys!"

"That we will."

"And as for spies—what'll we do with them, eh?"

"Hang 'em!" cried a man near where Conlay and Lawrence sat.

"Ay, that we will!"

"Order!" cried the chairman, "and you, Blacky Welton, sit down, or I'll have you put out."

"I won't sit down and I won't be put out. What I want to know is if there is any cussed traitors or spies in this here room."

"Sit down and we'll find out."

"Honest?"

"Honest."

"All right, go ahead, but—"

"Oh, shut up!" cried a man alongside of him, as he caught hold of his arm and pulled him off the chair.

And Blacky, coming down in a heap, immediately shut up, and began to hammer his neighbor with both fists, he retaliating in kind.

Order was eventually restored, however, and the chairman was once more able to make himself heard.

"I want all of you to go to the back part of the hall, and then come forward, up the center aisle, giving your names to the committee as you pass, one at a time."

"The committee don't know every man in the hall," growled Blacky.

"No," replied the chairman, "but we have here an alphabetical list of our members, and if any one passes that the committee don't know, we'll hunt up his name here."

"All right!" cried Blacky, as he rose, and staggered down the aisle, "come on, boys!"

"I appoint our two secretaries such committee," called out the chairman, as the crowd surged back.

There were fully two hundred men in the hall, made up of all nationalities.

One little fellow was talking and gesticulating furiously. He was French, and he spoke a mixture of French and English that could scarcely be understood.

"It's getting pretty hot!" whispered Conlay to Lawrence; "I wonder if I hadn't better make a break."

"Not for the world. Give your name as Harvey Hunter. He's a new man in our shop, and his name is on the roll."

"Isn't he here?"

"No; he's laid up with rheumatism. I'm sure no one knows him."

"Some of your fellow-workmen may."

"There are none of my shop-fellows here tonight. They sent me as their representative while they hold a secret meeting somewhere else."

"What for?"

"To decide whether they'll join with these fellows or not."

As they talked the men were going forward, giving their names to the secretaries, and as these latter were personally acquainted with nearly all of the members, the work of identification went on rapidly.

Finally Lawrence and his uncle were left all but alone, and the former said:

"Well, here goes; don't forget the name," and Charlie took up the rear of the procession, followed by Conlay.

Lawrence knew one of the secretaries, who greeted him warmly as he gave his name.

Conlay alone remained to pass.

He came forward and, in reply to the question put as to his name, he answered:

"Harvey Hunter."

"It's a lie!" shouted the little Frenchman, "is name ees Conleigh, an' he's von detectif!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A "LA BLANCHE BLOW."

FOR a moment there was silence.

Then the Frenchman screamed again:

"I swaare zat he ees un detectif—a detectif, an' zat he ees un espion—v'ot you call him? a spy!"

A roar of rage rose from the furious men:

"Kill him!"

"Hang him!"

"Shoot him!"

These and a hundred other cries mingled finally in a wild yell—the yell of a crazy mob, hungry for blood.

Conlay had backed into the corner, and the crowd hesitated for a moment, waiting for a leader.

Lawrence seized the opportunity to leap onto the stage:

"Men!" he cried, and his voice was so powerful that it rose even above that awful tumult.

He was a great favorite, and when several of his friends, catching sight of him, began to call for silence, the crowd gradually quieted down, with an occasional angry muttering, to listen.

"Go ahead, Charley," cried one.

"Yes, we'll hear what you've got to say first; time enough for him after," added another.

"Shut up, you jabbering idiot!" shouted a third at the little Frenchman, who was expostulating, with all his force, against any delay.

"Shut up, and let a better man talk."

Charley waited, outwardly calm, inwardly trembling for his uncle.

Finally he spoke:

"You know me, boys; know whether I am a traitor or not."

"That we do, old man!" came back from the crowd, "you're all right."

"Then, if I am all right, so should any man be that I recommend."

"And you back up this man, who comes here and gives a false name?"

"Yes."

"What do you know about him?"

"He is my uncle."

"Oh! That is different. But this false name—how do you explain that?"

"Listen, and I promise to make everything so clear that you will not only allow him to go, but will shake his hand and beg his pardon; for if there is any one to blame, it is I."

"Go ahead, we'll listen."

"Non! non!" shrieked the little Frenchman.

"I say he eez von r-ra-kil spy, an' zat ye vill hang him!"

"Oh, close your face!" cried one of Charley's intimates, as he shoved the foreigner into a chair; "you make me tired."

Quiet having been once more restored, and the Frenchman subdued, Charley explained everything; how he had met his uncle, the latter's errand, how he had come in, and how he had been induced to give a false name to simplify matters.

"Your explanation is perfectly satisfactory to me," said the chairman, "and I believe it is to the meeting."

"Certainly!" cried several of the men; but the majority, among whom were Blacky, who was ugly from drink, and some of the foreigners, only grumbled and shook their heads.

"That's a likely lie," said Blacky, "but I don't take no stock in it, see?"

"Nor I," muttered one of his pals.

"He's a detective," continued Blacky, getting on a chair, and speaking louder as he obtained listeners. "He's a detective, and, consequently, a liar. It's part of his bizness."

"An," broke in Frenchy, "an' he sont my broz'r back to *la belle France*, vere zey guillotine him—v'at you' call eet?—zey cot off hees 'ead!"

"An' a good thing it would have been if they'd cut yours off at the same time," said one of Charley's friends.

For the crowd was rapidly becoming divided into two factions, one for and one against Conlay, who still remained silent and watchful.

And, unfortunately for the detective's ultimate chances, the opposition seemed to largely outnumber his allies.

There were numbers of French, Swiss, and Germans there, all of them more or less tinged with anarchy.

For them, the question of what Conlay was doing there, or how he came to get there, was secondary. The mere fact that he was an officer and represented the law was sufficient to inflame their anger.

With them sided Blackey and a few others of his class, who were always ready for a row, even anxious for one.

Blacky was by this time in a perfect fury of passion, but as the chairman rapped once more for order, he paused a minute to hear what was said.

"I will entertain a motion," said the chairman, "to have the door unlocked and to allow Mr. Lawrence's uncle to leave the room."

"I make such a motion!" cried Charley, and it was instantly seconded.

The chairman put the question, and those voting "ay" were numerous.

But when he said:

"Those opposed?"

A storm of "noes" arose that showed which way the current was flowing.

Nevertheless, the chairman, who was one of Charley's friends, declared the motion carried, and ordered the doorkeeper to allow Conlay to pass out.

"No, he sha'n't!" cried Blacky. "I'll knock any man down that starts to open that door!"

A wild yell of applause followed this utterance.

Then for the first time Conlay spoke:

"If you will give me the key, sir," said he, "I will open the door."

He stopped a moment, and then added:

"And if any one attempts to knock me down, I promise to make it exceedingly interesting for him."

"Hurrah for Lawrence's uncle!" cried one of Charley's friends.

"Now, Cully Blacky," yelled another, "show your nerve."

"Settle it between the two!" suggested another, an admirer of the Marquis of Queensberry.

"Yes, let's have a ten-round go on the stage," added another.

But Conlay, not heeding these remarks, stepped up to the stage, where the chairman, to whom had been given the key, handed it down.

The detective started for the door.

Then Blacky, leaping from his chair, aimed and delivered a right-hand blow that would have stretched Conlay on the floor, had it reached its mark.

But the detective, throwing up his left elbow, tossed the blow off his forearm.

And at the same time he twisted on his heel, turning completely around, and as he twirled he threw all of his force into a terrific swing.

The tough was taken completely by surprise and he had no chance to dodge the clinched fist, which took him just behind the left ear, with an awful crash.

And Blacky fell sprawling to the ground and lay there as if dead.

The terrible force of the blow, the quickness, agility and skill displayed by the detective, paralyzed the crowd for a moment.

And Conlay took advantage of this.

The little Frenchman stood near him, and seizing the foreigner by the back of his neck and one shoulder, Conlay started on a run, shoving Frenchy before him.

The crowd parted, and before they recovered, the detective had reached and opened the door, and escaped with his prisoner.

A shout went up from Lawrence's friends.

That roused Blacky.

"For heaven's sake," he stammered, as he sat up, "what kicked me?"

CHAPTER XVII.

BEAULIEU'S GUILLOTINE.

WHEN Conlay reached the street with his captive, he turned in the direction of the station-house, that he knew to be around the next corner.

"V'at are you going to do wiz me?" inquired the Frenchman, as the detective hustled him along.

"Going to see that you get three months on the Island."

"On v'at char-r-ge?"

"On general principles."

"I make von bar-r-gain vid you."

"Well?"

"Loose me, an' I t'li vere zat young man—how you call him—Larrence—eez."

"You know?"

"Ver' vell."

"It's a bargain."

"Goot. Come wiz me, an' buy a leetle glass—un petit verre—of cognac—*eu de rive*—brandy, an' I tell you."

"Come along," said Conlay, readily agreeing to the proposition, the more so that he had in reality no specific charge to make against the man.

The Frenchman led the way to a little bar room near by, presided over by a black-eyed, black-bearded, black-browed compatriot, and soon they were seated in a little back room, with a bottle of brandy and two glasses before them.

"Now, go ahead," said Conlay, after the Frenchman had filled and emptied two glasses in rapid succession.

"I tell you vair Charles Larrence eez in a minute," he replied. "I no laik z t br-r-andy, an' vill ordair ze ozzer kin', if you vill excuse me."

He rose before the detective could interpose a word, and went to the door leading into the bar, where he called the host.

The man came, and the two exchanged several rapid sentences in a whisper.

Then the proprietor disappeared, and the Frenchman returned, after closing the door behind him.

"Ze br-r-andy vil be here instantly," he said, as he resumed his seat.

"Did it tak' all that whispering to order some brandy?" asked Conlay.

"Zis ees a ver' excellent kind. E t'es not giv' to all zat ask for eet. I mus' gif ze password—ze countersign—to get eet from ze lan'lord."

"Oh, I see," said the detective; "smuggled goods in all probability, and goods that may prove dear to the owner."

"Oh, non!" with a shrug of the shoulders. "Ze goods haf' pass' ze d-uane, ze costom 'ouse. Zis man ees no swindle."

"Maybe not, but I'll not touch any of the stuff, just the same."

"An' vy not?"

"I am afraid your friend might have put a little something in it—a knocker-out, for instance."

"Oh, sare—"

"Never mind that. Let's get down to business: where can I find that man Lawrence?"

"I will tell you, pra sonlee."

"You'll tell me n w. or go to the Island; I'm in no humor for trifling."

"Nor am I. Va!" (go!) cried the Frenchman, and at that moment a noose was dropped over Conlay's shoulders, and about his arms.

Then he was jerked back against the wall, the noose was drawn so tight as to cut into the flesh, and he sat there, like a trussed fowl, incapable of movement, as far as the upper part of his body was concerned.

His feet and legs were free, but that did him no good at all.

He was utterly powerless, and at the mercy of his captors.

His position explained the whispered conversation that had taken place, and he realized, thoroughly, that he had fallen into a trap.

A trap set for him by this vindictive Frenchman, who thus avenged the part Conlay had taken in the arrest of his brother.

That brother who was "wanted" in France for murder, who had been taken there and had his head cut off early one morning in May.

How many victims had preceded the detective in the chair on which he sat, he could not, of course, even guess.

Certainly the contrivance had not been arranged solely for his benefit.

He had noticed, as he sat down in the chair the Frenchman drew out for him, a curtain hanging against the wall, just behind him.

But he suspected no trap, and did not pay any attention to the covering of the window or door there.

And now that it was too late, he saw that the curtain was hung there for just such occasion.

All these thoughts passed through his mind like a flash.

Meantime, the little Frenchman, who chuckled all the time, examined him to see if his bonds were secure.

Satisfying himself of this he walked up in front of the detective, and glared at him like a hungry wolf.

"Aha!" he cried, and he executed a sort of war-dance before his prisoner.

"Aha! I haf' you now. An' my broder's deat', he shall be avenge!"

He leaned forward, took hold of and deliberately pulled Conlay's nose.

It was one of the most unfortunate pulls on record—for the puller.

It has been stated above that Conlay's arms and the upper part of his body were as useless to him as far as offense and defense are concerned, as if they did not exist.

But his feet and legs were free, and as, after pulling his nose, the Frenchman stepped back, Conlay inserted the toe of his heavy right boot under his tormentor's chin.

And the kick was given with such force and dexterity that the Frenchman was lifted clear off the ground and thrown backward onto the table behind him.

The only wonder was that his neck was not dislocated by the sudden jerk.

He lay there for a moment, incapable of speech, or action, while the detective, despite his unpleasant position, could not refrain from laughing heartily.

But in a few moments Louis came to, and taking a safe position on the other side of the table, well out of reach of that formidable foot, he hissed, as well as his sore chin would permit:

"Sacrement! bot I feeks you for zis keeck!"

And then he went toward the door.

If looks could have killed, the glance he gave Conlay as he left the room would have laid the latter back in the chair a corpse.

It could not be much more than nine o'clock, Conlay thought, and certainly if he cried out some one on the street must hear him.

It was worth the trial.

So he drew in his breath, preparatory to a powerful shout, when, as if some one behind him had noticed the motion, a wire screen was drawn tight over his lips.

He could breathe through it, but could not open his mouth wide enough to call out.

It was more and more evident that the Frenchman's accomplice, or accomplices, was, or were, watching his every movement.

A moment later and the chair on which he sat was drawn back, and between the curtains behind him, they falling in front of and leaving him in darkness.

Then he began to ascend, with a motion as if he were on an elevator, or a dumb-waiter, while the pulleys over his head creaked as if they were but rarely used.

A minute, and the upward motion ceased, a door in front of him slid up in its grooves, disclosing a dimly-lighted chamber in front of him, into which he was pushed.

And before him stood the Frenchman, leaning against a guillotine.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A GAME OF POKER.

As Warenne rose, after his stunning fall, he was dazed for a moment.

But he was quickly brought to his senses by the voice of the brawny young Southerner, who stood beside him.

"If, sah," he said, in low tones, but tones that vibrated with passion, "if, sah, yo' attempt to lay yo' hand on that innocent gyrl, I'll—I'll, why, sah, I'll bre'k every bone in yo' body, sah!"

"Who are you that come interfering between me and my sister?" cried Warenne.

"I don't believe she's yo' sistah, sah; an' ef yo' don't laik the way I do business, sah, why, sah, send me yo' frien's, an' I'll 'commode you, sah."

And lifting his hat he started away, but in a moment turned and came back.

"I will say to you, sah," he added, "thet ef yo'mek' any moah bre'ks of thet so't, I'll shoot you as I would a no 'count coon dog, sah. Yo' heah?"

Warenne made no reply.

"Yo' won't answer? Then I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll go to the captain, who is a puusonal friend o' mine, sah, an' I'll tell him how laik a cur yo've acted, an' I'll have him put yo' in i'ons, sah, fo' the res' o' the vo'ge."

This would n't have suited Warenne's plans at all, so he gruffly replied:

"I may have been a little hasty, and if the young lady will come out of her room, I'll apologize."

"Very well."

And the Southerner knocked on the door, and in a moment Mollie appeared.

"I owe you an ap-logie," said Warenne, "and beg your forgiveness, / I hope you will grant it, and I, for my part, promise never to repeat the offense."

Mollie bowed and disappeared, and the Southerner, turning, left the cabin and went on deck, while Warenne going to his state-room at the other end of the cabin, threw himself on his berth and cursed his impetuosity.

The bell was ringing overhead, and the voices of the stewards, warning visitors on board, were heard all over the vessel:

"All ashore that's going!"

"All ashore that's going ashore!"

And hurried good-byes were being said in all quarters.

In a short time the vessel began to move, and Warenne, burying his anger for the time, went on deck.

One of the first persons that he saw was the Southerner, standing on the bridge of the steamer, talking with the captain.

"They seem thick as thieves," grumbled Warenne. "I guess it stands me in hand to lay low while on board, for I'm in the minority."

And a moment after, as Lucy and Mollie came on deck to take a parting look at the city, he thought:

"Why was I such an idiot as to bring that woman along? I might have left her in the city, fast enough."

He paced back and forth.

room. This soon began to fill up, and when Warenne, who had strolled out on deck for a moment, returned, he found several games of cards in full swing. He looked on for some time, until a gentleman, who was playing poker at a table with the Southerner and three others, rose.

"I am an unfortunate traveler," he said, in apology, "but I always get sea-sick, no matter if the ocean is as quiet as an inland lake in a calm."

"It's constitutional, I suppose, and is my only apology for quitting you; but I've got to retire."

"Perhaps," looking at Warenne, "this gentleman might sit in so as to keep the quintette intact."

"I should be glad to do so," replied Warenne, who was an inveterate poker-player, "if there is no objection."

"I have none," said the Southerner, and as it was to him that Warenne had apparently addressed his remark, the others added their willingness, and in a moment more Warenne had taken the vacant seat.

The game continued without incident, or any very heavy play, for some time.

The party was surprised, however, at the return of the sea-sick player, who came back in the course of an hour.

"Why," said Warenne, "you back? Take your place in the game, sir; I do not wish to rob you of it."

"No, no," protested the other, "I would not dare. The sea is so perfectly quiet that there is no excuse for even me to be ill."

"There is not the slightest motion."

"But I would not dare to go into the game again, for I may have to get out at an instant's warning."

"I'll sit down a moment, though, if there is no objection and look on."

"You don't mind?"

He addressed his question to the Southerner, who replied, warmly:

"W'y no, sah, not at all. Glad to hev' you look ovab my hand, sah."

"No gen'leman could obj'c' to anutha gen'leman's doin' th'et."

So the stranger drew his chair behind the Southerner and the game proceeded. The "ante" was not very large and they were playing a "limited" game, so that there was but a small amount of excitement.

But at length, after a somewhat breezy "Jack-pot," the Southerner dealt the cards, Warenne "stayed," as did the dealer, and the rest "dropped out."

"How m'ny kya'ds?" asked the Southerner, of Warenne.

"Hold on a minute," said the latter, "I've got a proposition to make."

"What is it, sah?"

"Let's drop the limit, for this hand, and have a little fun out of it; the game is getting slow."

"I'm agreed, sah. Do yo' betting."

"I'll raise the blind fifty," said Warenne, as he tossed an "L" on the table.

"That's not enough, sah," quietly replied his opponent.

"I'll hev' to mek' th'et an even hundred." And a "century" was thrown alongside the fifty.

"Well, just to make it in eresting, I'll cause it to cost you just a hundred more to draw cards."

And Warenne placed a hundred and fifty dollars on the board.

It was growing interesting, and several spectators crowded ar'nd the table.

"I'll not be the first to cry quits, sah, I assure yo' o' th'et," r'plied the planter, as he drew out a roll of bills as large as a man's fist.

"Thar's yo' hundred, an' I'll raise yo' an even thousand mo'."

Warenne "skinned" his cards over carefully, and then glanced at—or past—his adversary, who took no pains to conceal his hand.

His glance seemed to satisfy him, for he drew out his purse and was about to speak, when he was interrupted by a voice behind him.

"Hold on, here, gentlemen," said the speaker, "there's cheating here."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ACCUSER ACCUSED.

The interruption was a startling one, and to no one more than to Warenne.

At that moment, too, the man who had been sitting beh'nd the Southerner, rose and started for the door.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," he said, "but this time I am really sick."

"Hold on!" cried the man who stood behind Warenne, "you're interested in my remark and had better wait."

It is doubtful if this suggestion would have had any effect, had not the Southerner risen and stepped in front of the door.

"No one goes outen hya'," he said, quietly, "until this mattah is settled."

And then he turned to Warenne and added:

"Am I not right, sah?"

"Perfectly," replied Warenne, who had remained seated, and curiously quiet, not even turning to see who it was behind him that had spoken.

He had started as if shot at the first words, but made no further sign.

"Now, sah," asked the Southerner, "what do yo' mean by this hya's statement of yo's?"

There was a breathless silence as he waited for a reply.

But it came promptly.

"I mean that I saw the man behind you making signs to your opponent, who looked at him before he made his last bet."

"Yo' are sho'?"

"Sure? Yes."

"And as I know this man here,"—his hand fell heavily on Warenne's shoulder as he spoke—"and have heard him boast of his system, I am perfectly familiar with it."

He paused a moment, and then added:

"To prove my statement I will, with your permission, tell you what cards you hold."

The Southerner hesitated.

"Since," said he, "we are interrupted by onlookers, I propose, sir, that each one of us draw down his stakes."

And without waiting for a reply, he picked up his money, and put it back in his purse.

"Now, sah," said the Southerner, without touching his money, "tell me what kya'ls I hold an' prove what you say."

The man behind Warenne answered, without an instant's hesitation:

"I saw the gentleman who sat behind you take a cigar from his pocket, and cut off the end with his knife, using the large blade."

"Well, sah?"

"He closed the knife toward him—and you will see that every movement means something."

"He put his knife in his coat pocket—the left-hand one, and felt in his vest for a match with the same hand."

"Go on, sah; yo' watched him pretty close, I see that."

"Now I'll explain: he has two knives, each with four blades: the blades mean the cards from ace to eight-spot."

"Had he bitten the cigar's end off, holding it between the thumb and first finger of his right hand, that would have meant a nine spot, two fingers a ten."

"Yes, sah. Is that all?"

"The same manner of holding the cigar with the left hand would indicate the Jack and queen; for the king he would have held the third finger underneath the cigar, carrying it to his lips with the thumb, first and second fingers."

"Very ingenious, sah."

"Yes, he thought so the night he told me of it—not stating that he intended using it, but explaining how simple it would be, provided an accomplice could catch sight of an opponent's hand."

"This is all romance," cried Warenne.

"And a decidedly lying one at that," added the accused man.

"Wait a moment," continued their accuser.

"Yes, yo'd be tab'l" added the Southerner, frowning slightly.

"When that man cut his cigar, he did it with the large blade of a pearl-handled knife—meaning the ace."

"Go on."

"When he placed it in the left-hand lower pocket of his sack coat, it meant t'ree."

"I—" interrupted the Southerner.

"One minute, please. Wait until I am through."

"Certainly, sah."

"When he felt in the upper right hand pocket of his vest for a match, it meant a pair—your hand, sir, consisted of three aces and a pair of something—the size of the pair does not affect the value of your full-hand."

"By gawge, sah!—"

"One moment more: I am a poor man, having nothing in the world but a round-trip ticket to New Orleans, my trunk and its contents and a hundred dollars."

"I will place that hundred d'llars in the hands of any one here except two robbers—to be given to the Sailors' Hospital, if this man's hand does not beat yours."

Warenne l'aper' to his feet.

"I will not stay here any longer to be thus insul'ed!" he cried. "I wanted to h'ar the end of your fairy tale, but will hear no more."

"Let me pass!"

"Sit down!" cried the Southerner, and several of the spectators echoed his words angrily.

Warenne sunk back in his chair.

"Gen'lemen!" said the Southerner, as he leaned toward the table, "here is my hand; look at it."

And he spread out the five cards he held, faces up.

There were three aces and two tens.

The stranger had read the cards correctly.

That there had been collusion was evident.

A murmur of anger went up from all those standing around as they looked curiously at the man who had exposed the gamblers.

He was young, fair, and bore in his face the traces of recent illness.

Indeed his voice trembled with weakness, and it could readily be seen that he was far from strong.

During all the time that he was speaking Warenne never once turned and looked at him.

He acted as though he knew, and yet did not know, the man who was accusing him.

When the Southerner had shown his cards, one of the party spoke.

"Come, sir," he said, addressing Warenne, "it's your turn. That's a pretty good hand on the table, and if yours does not beat it, you will be cleared from this charge."

"Yes, yes, show your hand!" cried another, angrily.

A third reached forward and looked under the table, where Warenne's hands were hidden.

The floor was strewn with little bits of pasteboard.

"He's torn his cards into a thousand pieces!" he cried.

"Ah! then he must be guilty."

"Perhaps he is, but you can't prove it now."

"We can't, eh? How about looking through the pack to see what cards are missing?"

The Southerner picked up the pack and sorted the cards into suits, in the midst of a dead silence.

The four sevens and the king of clubs were wanting.

Warenne had held fours agains' a full hand, and would have won the money beyond doubt, for neither would have drawn a card.

"Trifl!" hissed the Southerner. "Yes,"—and he looked from one to the other—"thieves!"

Warenne rose, and for the first time looked at his accuser.

"Ah!" he cried triumphantly, "a worthy witness you are, Murderer Charles Lawrence!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE CAPTAIN TAKES A HAND.

This charge fell like a thunderbolt on the crowd in the smoking-room.

But interested as were Warenne and the man he addressed, they were not more so than the Southerner.

The man whom Warenne had addressed looked him square in the face.

"Murderer?" he repeated. "What do you mean—are you drunk or crazy?"

"Neither," replied Warenne.

"Then exp'ain."

"Do you deny t'at your name is Lawrence?"

"I do not."

"Charles Lawrence?"

"That is perfectly correct."

"Nephew of the late Henry Warenne, of West Eighth-street, New York City?"

"The late Henry Warenne, you say?"

"Yes."

"Heavens! Is my uncle dead?"

"Yes, as well you know, for you murdered him."

"I—murdered him!"

Here the Southerner interrupted.

"Yo' did me a favah, sah," he said to Lawrence, "and I'm goin' to try an' do you one."

"Don't say any moah then yo' hev to, fo' it'll count against yo' on yo' trial, ye know."

"You are kind, sir," said Lawrence, "but I have no fears of that nature. I am as innocent as you your el't can be, and was, until a moment ago, utterly ignorant of my uncle's death."

"Your assumption of ignorance don't go down, sir. You, and you alone are guilty. The fact alone that your chain was found in the yard—"

"My chain? What chain?"

"Yur watch-chain, that I ad evidently beccme loosened as you crawled through the buffet, and that dropped off under the window."

"If you mean that gold and platinum chain, the one uncle gave me, I can say that I returned it to him after our quarrel."

"Does any one know it to be so?"

"You are insulting."

"Is it possib'e, Mr. Lawrence, that you did not know of yo' uncle's death?"

"I knew absolutely nothing of it until this man spoke of it."

"But the papahs were full of it."

"

He had evidently been listening outside the smoking-room.

The Southerner took a card from his case and gave it to the waiter.

"Present my compliments to the captain," he said, "and request him to do us the honor of coming heah fo' a moment."

"Yes, sir," and the steward disappeared.

"I stay here no longer," muttered Warenne, suddenly.

"I'm going on deck."

"One moment, please," interrupted the Southerner.

"The captain will be heah in a moment, an' I want him to heah yo' story."

"An' I reckon he'll be moah then interested in it."

"Don't oppose me, sir!" cried Warenne, threateningly; "don't stop me, or I will make you regret it."

He stepped forward.

Instantly the Southerner made two motions, rapid as one.

With his left hand he caught Warenne by the collar, with his right stuck the muzzle of a revolver into his face.

"Sit down, sah, or I'll put a hole in yo' head yo' kin sling a dog into!"

And he swung Warenne heavily back into the chair from which he had arisen.

"An' yo', sah," continued the Southerner, without evincing the slightest excitement, and addressing Lawrence:

"You sit down ovah theah an' wait till I get through with you."

He leaned over and picked up his money as Lawrence sat down, and then resumed his former position by the door.

"Gentlemen," said Warenne, "I must protest against this exhibition of brute force, and must appeal to you for protection."

At this moment the captain of the vessel appeared, and the Southerner stepped aside to let him enter.

"What is it?" asked the officer. "What is wanted? Some gambling trouble?" he continued, seeing the cards.

"Wot's then thet, sah," replied the Southerner, "it's a question of an abduction, and a murder!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, sah, thet I cha'ge thet man with abductin' a young lady, an' thet he, in tu'n, cha'ges that man with mu'da'!"

Warenne broke out:

"Whatever has been done, was done under the jurisdiction of the United States, whose power does not extend beyond three miles from shore."

"On the open seas I defy her laws and her officers, if there be any on board; they have no right to arrest me, or any one else."

"They hev'n't, eh?" cried the captain, getting angry, "we'll see about that!"

"I am captain of this ship, and I sail under the Stars and Stripes. This is an American vessel, commanded by an American."

"And if you've done anything that lays you liable to arrest, why, sir, you shall be arrested."

"You are no officer," retorted Warenne, "who is there here to put me under arrest?"

"I'll said the Southerner, taking off his hat.

And Warenne recognized Bronson.

CHAPTER XXI. A WITNESS DISPOSED OF.

There was a moment's silence.

Then Bronson spoke:

"You are right, Mr. Warenne," he said.

"Ah?" sneered the other.

"Yes," continued Bronson, not heeding the interruption, "your interpretation of your position is correct."

"I am most grateful—" began Warenne, when he was interrupted.

"But the moment we approach the coast, I shall take charge of you."

And with no further words Bronson left the room.

Then the captain spoke again.

"I have no doubt," said he, "that Mr. Bronson is correct."

And then he stepped close up to Warenne and laid a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"The crime for which you are wanted was committed on United States soil."

"Corre-t," replied Warenne, unmoved.

"Therefore I have no jurisdiction over you," added the captain.

"Precisely what I claimed."

"But if you do anything out of the way on board this vessel, or attempt to, I'll iron you as certain as you're detected."

And then the captain left the room, in his turn, followed by Warenne's parting shot:

"Th'nk you for the warning!"

And then he added, in a lower tone:

"I'll take care not to be detected."

He started for the door, giving an almost imperceptible glance at his late partner in the game as he went out.

That man in turn rose and left the smoking-room, others followed, and in a few moments the place was empty, save for young Lawrence, who remained.

Bronson had asked him to wait there, and he determined to do so.

He wanted to learn more of the murder.

For it is scarcely necessary to state that he was innocent.

Some one, he saw, had endeavored to fasten the crime on him.

But who?

This he determined to find out.

And he also determined to ask Bronson to aid him. For he realized that the former Southerner was a detective.

No one else would masquerade as he had done.

So Lawrence waited, while the others left the room.

Warenne went on deck, whither his ex-partner in the poker game followed him.

They sought a secluded spot, where they would not be overheard, and where they could scarcely be seen.

"Curse the luck!" cried Blimm—for so he was called—as he approached his friend.

"That don't do any good," replied Warenne, quietly.

"Well, what will?" asked Blimm.

"Curse the man—or men—who interfered in our little game."

"With all my heart. But—"

"Well?"

"I don't see that such a proceeding would do any more good than the other."

"True; mere cursing won't do."

"What else, then?"

"We must act."

"Act how?"

"Oh, get even with that man Lawrence."

"Th' n send him to the gallows."

"I wish I could."

"Well, can't you?" asked Blimm.

"I don't know how."

"But this murder!"

"Oh, that. I only know what the papers said about it."

"Yes?" and Blimm raised his eyebrows incredulously.

"What do you mean by your confounded insinuation?"

"You know."

"I do not."

"Oh, yes, you do."

"And I say, no!"

"And I say, yes!" And Blimm stepped close to Warenne and look him steadily in the face.

The latter turned and tossed his cigar over the bulwarks and then spoke:

"Look here, Blimm," he said, "what are you driving at?"

"Simply that I believe you know more about that murder than any one else."

"How should I?"

"Because you had a hand in it!"

"You're crazy—or drunk."

"No; I am neither."

"Then explain yourself."

"The night before that murder was committed, you lost a little over three thousand dollars to me."

"Corr. et."

"And gave me your I. O. U. for the amount, promising to pay me the next morning."

"Correct again."

"That next morning you went up to your uncle's house, and let yourself in at the door with a pass-key."

Warenne started.

"How do you know that?"

"Because I shadowed you."

He paused a moment.

"But," he continued, "you did not come out again."

"Ah?"

"N., for I watched for you until after the murder was discovered and then mingled with the crowd about the house."

"Well?"

"And you were not there when the police arrived."

"So you conclude, Mr. Blimm—"

"That you killed your uncle, after his refusal to give you the money, and then escaped by the back way when the butler went to the door to let Detective Bronson in."

"Is that all?"

"Ain't it enough?"

"Not nearly."

"Then I'll add a little more."

"Thanks."

Warenne's voice was as quiet as if he were carrying on social converse in a drawing-room.

Then he added:

"Suppose that we sit down."

He did so, using the rather low bulwarks for a seat, and holding on by one of the shrouds.

"You went out through the pantry after hiding in the buffet, and dropping a letter there—"

"Did you see me?"

"N.; but I've reasoned this matter out correctly, I know."

"Ah? Go on."

"The letter implicated your cousin, and was a clever stroke."

"Thank you."

"But in dropping the chain you overreached yourself."

"Th'nk so?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Because you made the proofs too clear. One was sufficient; two too many."

"So you think, my dear Blimm, that I killed my uncle?"

"I do."

"What motive had I?"

"Robbery. You owed me that money; he refused to give it to you, and you killed him."

"And then robbed him?"

"Yes. And after robbing him you did not pay me, for you know that I have never seen you since, until to-night."

"When I told you that if you'd sit in that game

we'd win enough to enable me to pay you and something more."

"Exactly."

"You worked the sea-sick racket beautifully; you should turn actor."

"I'd rather turn dealer; so give me enough to start a bank and we'll cry quits."

"All right; I happen to be in funds, so I'll pay you your three thousand."

"Tain't enough."

"What do you mean?"

Warenne had placed his hand in his coat pocket, but took it out again.

"That I want \$10,000."

"Blackmail, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then take it!" and Warenne struck him a terrific blow between the eyes, knocking him overboard, senseless, while Warenne yelled out: "Man overboard!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CAPTAIN POINTS.

As the man fell into the waters below with an unheeded splash, Warenne removed the brass knuckles from his right hand, and tossed them overboard.

He then stepped leisurely on deck, and was about to walk away, when a man dropped from the ratlines overhead, alongside him.

It was the captain.

And it was the captain's hand that, for a second time that evening, fell heavily on Warenne's shoulder.

But one word came from his lips.

Yet he hissed this out with the intensity of a dozen sentences:

"Murderer!"

For the first time, probably, in his life, Warenne shrank under accusation.

ment," replied the doctor. "His chin is crushed in and his lower jaw shattered."

"Then he is stone-dead, doctor?" asked Bronson.

"Stone-dead."

"And not from drowning?"

"No. Your heroic effort was made in vain, sir."

"No," replied the detective, "not in vain."

"What do you mean?"

"That if his body had not been recovered, the jury might have disagreed."

"On what ground?"

"That Warenne's blow did not kill him; but that he died by drowning."

"And now?"

"And now we will prove by your testimony that the man never breathed after he touched the water."

"And that it was the blow that killed him," added the doctor.

"Precisely."

"I will be ready to give my testimony wherever and whenever it may be needed."

"Thank you, doctor."

"And," added the captain, "between us, doctor, we'll hang this fellow."

"That we will."

"It's a pity we can not hang him twice."

"Twice?"

"Yes."

"For what?"

"First, for the murder of his uncle; second for the murder of this man."

"Then," said Bronson, "you think that Warenne is guilty of the first crime?"

"I know it."

"You know it?"

"Yes. There remains not the shadow of a doubt."

"Will you explain, now, captain? or do you prefer to wait?"

"Just as well now as later."

All clustered closely about him.

And then he related how he had seen Warenne leave the smoking-room.

And had noticed that his confederate followed closely behind him.

He had kept his eye on the two until they met and began to talk.

Then, thinking that they might be plotting further mischief, he determined to hear what they were saying.

The two men were standing on the starboard side of the vessel.

The captain had gone to the larboard shrouds, and had climbed the ladder until he had reached the top, had crossed over and descended until within ear-shot.

The two men had not noticed him, and, with the exception of the commencement of their conversation, had caught every word.

And had heard Blimm accuse Warenne of murdering his uncle.

Which accusation Warenne had not denied.

"It's a clear case," said Bronson.

"And if he don't hang for one murder, he will for the other," added a bystander.

"Certainly," continued Cam. "He must have struck that man with a pair of knuckles, and the fact that he put them on will show premeditation."

"I certainly heard a slight splash just after the body fell overboard," cried the captain.

"That splash was doubtless caused by something Warenne threw overboard," exclaimed Bronson.

And then he added:

"I wish I had you in New York, Mr. Warenne."

"You shall have him there to-morrow!" said the captain, pointing forward.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WARENNE'S REVENGE.

EVERY one looked in the direction indicated by the captain.

A steamer was rapidly approaching them, showing her red and green lights.

Besides this, she was burning a signal, composed of various colored fires, indicating the line she belonged to.

"That is the twin steamer to this one," explained the captain.

"And bound to New York?" inquired the detective.

"Yes."

"Can you not hail her and transfer me to her?"

"Certainly; that is what I meant when I said that you could reach there to-morrow."

"Then I will get ready at once, and inform the ladies that we are about to leave the vessel."

"The ladies?"

"Yes."

"What ladies do you mean?"

"My wife and Miss Bryton."

Lawrence, who had been an attentive listener, started forward.

"Did you say that Miss Bryton was on board, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, she is below with my wife."

"Miss Lucy Bryton?"

"Yes."

"But— Oh, impossible!"

"Not at all; Mr. Warenne is responsible for her being here."

"What right had Mr. Warenne—"

It was Warenne who interrupted:

"The right of a husband, sir."

"A husband! Surely you are not Lucy Bryton's husband?"

"Surely I am; or, rather, I am the husband of Lucy Warenne, who was Lucy Bryton."

"It's a lie!"

All started and looked around. For it was a woman who had spoken the words written above.

It was Lucy Bryton.

Or Lucy Warenne.

Which?

A rocket hissed in the air over their heads, and exploded in a thousand sparks.

And a glare of light burst out from the bows where signals were burning.

The captain had not forgotten his promise to Bronson.

He had signaled the approaching steamer to stop. His signal was promptly answered.

And the two steamers began to reduce speed as they neared each other.

But Warenne paid no attention to all this.

"It is the truth!" he repeated.

"And I say that it is a lie!"

And Lucy Bryton, closely followed by Mollie, stepped into the circle formed by the listening crowd.

Instantly Cam stepped alongside his wife, while Lawrence followed Lucy closely.

"Lucy, my child," said Warenne, quietly and soothingly, "you are not yourself. Go and rest. When you are better—"

"Not myself? Then I have acted better than I knew."

"Acted?"

"Yes. You thought me ill—half-crazed; that I was without will-power, and entirely subject to you."

"And so you were."

"Apparently, yes; but I was deceiving you all the time. Long have I suspected you, long wanted an opportunity to unmask you!"

"Lucy—"

"Yes; when you came to Saratoga with that story of my mother's illness, I suspected you more strongly than ever before. And I left there with you and stepped off to visit Jenny Reynolds, at Rondout, at your request, while you went on to New York."

"You are improvising!"

"Not wishing to worry mother, I did not let her know of my departure from Saratoga. I seconded you in everything."

"Even to marrying me."

"A lie! I stayed with Jenny until you came and told me my mother was well again."

"My dearest Lucy—"

"Hold your tongue, sir!" cried Bronson, "or we'll find means to make you!"

"Then," continued Lucy, "I went to New York with you, Jenny accompanying us, for I was ill."

"Yes, poor child, very ill!"

"In imagination," laughed Lucy. "And I continued ill until you brought Mollie, here, to me, and Lucy went home."

"Yes," broke in Mollie, "and a more clever actress, on or off the stage, never lived."

"Thank you, Mollie," smiled Lucy.

"You nearly deceived me, even after you told me you were masquerading," replied Mollie.

"A tissue of lies!" cried Warenne; "you and I were married in Saratoga, and you know it."

"When?" asked Lucy, sarcastically. "On the day you sent my mother the message that I would be home in two days, dating your message Saratoga when I had been away from there a week?"

"How did you find that out?" cried Warenne, off his guard.

"Mollie found it out for me."

"And you've committed yourself," added Bronson, "so get ready to go back to New York and answer to two serious charges."

"And can I go too, Cam?" asked Mollie.

"Certainly, child."

"And I?" added Lucy.

"Yes, and this gentleman will take charge of you."

Lucy turned, and for the first time saw Lawrence.

"Charley!" she cried, and held her hands out to him, regardless of everything else, except that she saw her lover again.

But Lawrence shrank back.

"Lucy," he said, "I am charged with the murder of your mother's husband."

"But you are innocent, I know."

"Innocent, I swear!"

"And I believe you, though the whole world accuse you!"

"Thank you, Lucy; your faith is not undeserved."

And taking her hand, which he drew under his arm, he walked aft.

But the captain stopped them.

"I'm sorry, my children," he said, "to have to interrupt you: but time is extremely valuable. You must get ready to leave the vessel."

"Very well, captain," returned Lawrence, "and thank you for the opportunity."

"But your health—the trip to New Orleans ordered by your doctor?"

"Here is my health, my strength," he replied, simply, looking fondly at Lucy; "she will do me more good than all the sea-voyages ever prescribed."

"I believe you, my boy," and the captain slapped him on the shoulder.

"You must be married, captain," hazarded Lucy, smiling a little, but with a tear shining in either eye.

"I am, my lass, and one of my girls is about your age."

"I want to know her some day, sir."

"That you shall. When I get back from this trip, I'll bring her to see you."

By this time the two steamers were lying close alongside each other, rocking gently on the quiet sea.

Lights were burning brilliantly, and the transfer could be easily and rapidly made.

Sachels and bundles were quickly brought from below and handed into the boat.

As for their trunks, they were deep in the hold, and they would have to wait until the return trip of the steamer to get them.

Many a warm hand shake was given and returned, and many thanks showered on the captain.

Finally all entered the boat, and she moved away, amid a volley of cheers and waving of handkerchiefs.

Suddenly, and without a moment's warning, Warenne, who sat near Lucy, leaped to his feet.

And as he did so he caught the girl by the arm.

Then, with a mighty impulse, he leaped overboard, dragging her with him, and sunk out of sight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LOUIS JOINS HIS BROTHER.

WHEN Conlay recognized the insurmount against which the little Frenchman was leaning, he could not repress a shudder.

And with every sign of exultation the man standing there noticed this.

"Aha!" he shouted; "you t-r-r-amble!" and he chuckled loudly.

"Sink, eef you tr-r-amble now, w'at will be yo' feelings when you see ze knife cut your t'roat."

He waited a moment, apparently for a reply.

Then appeared to realize that Conlay could not answer on account of the wire gag he wore.

So, carefully avoiding those dangerous feet, he stepped to Conlay's side and removed the fixture.

"Zere!" he cried, now holler your lungs out; no one can 'ear you."

Conlay drew a long breath, and looked his captor squarely in the eye.

"So, my frien', he said, "you add assassination to your other crimes."

"Assassination!" cried the Frenchman.

"Yes."

"Zis eez not assassination; eet eez r-r-r-r-revenge!"

The rolling of the "r's" in the last word was like the patter of hail on a tin roof.

The foreigner was crazed with drink,

er's orbs fairly blazed with rage at being thus taunted by the undaunted detective.

"Shut your eyes! By gar, I vill prop zem open wiz ze *cur-a nt*—ze toos-peeks, so you can not shot zem!" and he washed down his indignation in another glass of brandy.

Then he again rose and went to the guillotine.

The instrument was patterned after those used in France for the execution of all criminals convicted for capital crimes.

The drunken Frenchman laid down on the board prepared to receive the body of the victim, and cried:

"See! Zis ees ze way you shall lie!"

The table being between Conlay and the instrument of death, he could only see the head of his tormentor, and that only by twisting his neck to one side.

"When you are here," continued Louis, "I vill pull ze cord; ze knife vill fall; your head vill fall in ze basket; ze blood vill flow, an' my brozer vill be avenge!"

He began to sing, as he lay there, looking up at the knife that hung suspended just over his neck.

Then, suddenly, Conlay started. He noticed that, as he leant far to the left, the cord that held his right arm grew slack, and that he could move that arm!

Slowly, quietly, cautiously he worked and twisted his hand, until, finally, it slipped through the noose that held it and was free!

The heat of the room had caused Conlay to perspire freely, and the delay of the now drunken Frenchman bade fair to be fatal to the latter.

Quietly Conlay wormed his hand back to his hip pocket—quietly he drew out his revolver; but, as he sat there, still bound, he could not reach the Frenchman with his bullet, for the table intervened.

Should he wait, and, as the foreigner arose, end the matter there and then?

But, suppose Louis should, before rising, call his accomplices? for he doubtless had some.

Then Conlay would be worse off than now.

He leaned to the left and looked.

The Frenchman still lay there, and, just over his head, hung the fatal cord, a pull on which would release the knife.

Conlay's eye followed the cord until it reached the point where it crossed the frame, and a thought flashed through his brain, following which he raised his hand, aimed steadily and fired.

The bullet cut the cord and freed the knife, which slid down like a flash.

Louis had joined his brother!

And a voice below cried:

"That's Conlay's barker, an' I'll bet on it!"

CHAPTER XXV.

EXIT HENRY WARENNE.

As Warenne and Lucy disappeared in the water, Lawrence, who was seated well forward, leaped after them.

Cam also rose, but, instead of following Lawrence, he stood still and watched the surface eagerly.

Seconds that seemed hours passed, and then Lawrence's head appeared close beside the boat.

Instantly Cam grasped his arm and drew him up.

Lawrence placed one hand on the edge of the boat, and pulled, and as he raised his other hand, it could be seen that he was the uppermost link in a living chain—a chain of which Lucy was the second link, and Warenne the third!

For the girl had twisted herself away from the man, and now he held her by one hand, while Lawrence held the other.

The latter and the girl were drawn on board by sturdy hands, and Warenne, whose grasp had been loosened, came next.

The first two were in full possession of their senses; but Warenne was all but dead.

His leap overboard had been a deliberate attempt at suicide, and as he sunk beneath the surface, he had drawn his lungs full of the fluid, so that when they reached the steamer, to which they were transferred, he was all but insensible.

Lucy was hurried to her state-room, to which Mollie followed, and saw that she was made comfortable before leaving her.

Lawrence also was bundled below, and drank hot potions until he fell into a profuse perspiration and a deep sleep.

As for Warenne, the ship's surgeon took him in hand, but, it must be confessed, not very tenderly, for his actions in leaping overboard, and pulling Lucy after him, had been plainly seen from the steamer.

Besides this, Bronson had spoken to the doctor.

"Save him, doctor," he said, "if you possibly can."

"I don't know whether he is worth it," replied the physician, coldly; and he looked at Bronson as though he would like to knock him down.

"I agree with you, perfectly," laughed the detective, "but I have particular use for him."

"What under the sun is such a cur fit for?" asked the doctor, surprised, and somewhat mollified.

"Fit for on'y one thing in the world."

"And what is that?"

"Hanging!"

"Oh! Then—you—?"

"I am an officer; that man is my prisoner!"

"I see."

"And he is, I think, guilty of murder."

"Murder?"

"Yes; did you read an account of the Warenne murder, in New York, some time ago?"

"Certainly."

"Well, that is the murdered man's nephew, and, probably, is his murderer."

"Then, if he's born to be hanged, he certainly can not be drowned, so we'll see if we can't bring him to," and the doctor worked away twice as hard as he had before this colloquy.

It was not very long before his efforts were crowned with success. Warenne opened his eyes, heaved a deep sigh and looked around.

He saw Cam, shuddered and looked at the doctor.

"Where am I?" he gasped.

"You are on the steamer, bound for New York."

"Then I did not drown?"

"You certainly didn't."

"And the young lady who fell overboard at the same time that I did?"

"Fell overboard?"

"Yes."

"Was dragged overboard by you, you mean?" And, disgusted at Warenne's cold, deliberate falsehood, uttered almost in the face of death, the doctor left him, for he knew that the man required no further attention from him.

Then Bronson stepped forward.

"I'll take charge of you now," said he, and he clicked a pair of handcuffs together, significantly.

"If you will go below, and submit, quietly, to be locked in your state-room, I will not insist on putting these on you."

He waited for a reply, but none came.

"Sulking, eh?" he said. "I'll soon cure you of that complaint," and, stooping over, he snapped the "bracelets" on Warenne's wrists.

"When you come to your senses and show a little more disposition to be decent, I'll take them off," he added.

"It don't make any difference to me whether I wear them or not," and Warenne, though weak, rose to his feet.

"I can walk and talk well enough with them on, and as I don't intend to go in swimming again tonight, I can dispense with the use of my hands for a while."

His teeth chattered as he spoke.

"But, I say," he continued, as Bronson turned away.

"Well?" asked the detective.

"I'm beastly cold; can't you let me have a drop of brandy?"

"Certainly; I don't want any one to suffer."

"Then I'll go with you and get it."

They walked a few steps and then Warenne added:

"After I get my drink, I'll get you to let me step into the engine-room for a moment."

"What for?" asked Cam.

"To get warm; you must not forget that my clothes are soaked."

"True."

"And I am, consequently, nearly freezing."

"Why not take off those clothes and go to bed?"

"In one of those narrow, coffin-like berths?"

"Certainly."

"After my late experience? No, thank you!"

"What do you mean?"

"That the being dragged back to life, after being nearly drowned, is more torturing than if I had died."

"Well?"

"Should I go to sleep in a berth, I would surely dream."

"What then?"

"The sense of suffocation that overwhelmed me as the water filled my lungs was nothing compared to that I would feel in the close, narrow confines of a state room."

"I see, and understand clearly."

"Then you will let me do as I ask?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you."

"For nothing. You are my prisoner, accused of murder; but because you showed no pity, it is no reason that I should show none."

"I did not murder my uncle."

"That we will see."

"We certainly will."

"And we won't discuss it now; here is your brandy."

Warenne gulped down the steaming mixture hastily, and then led the way to the engine-room, Bronson following him.

The warm air from the furnaces made the place intensely hot, but the detective bore it patiently.

From where they stood they could see the working of the ponderous machinery, as the steamer glided rapidly on. The great masses of iron and steel slid and slipped noiselessly backward and forward in the perfection of human invention.

Suddenly, without a word, Warenne threw himself into the mass of mechanism. And before Bronson could utter a sound, the man was crushed and ground into a shapeless mass.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOLLIE CRIES.

The sudden and awful taking-off of Warenne seemed a fitting end to his crimes, yet it was days before the detective recovered from it.

The shock had been a severe one, and on the arrival of Bronson, his wife and Miss Bryton in New York, he felt completely unnerved.

They drove at once to the St. Cyr, from which place Cam notified the authorities of what had happened.

He also sent Conlay a dispatch.

It was not long before Lawrence was under arrest, and the coroner had charge of Warenne's remains.

A reply to the message came, stating that Conlay would be there during the afternoon. It was from Mrs. Conlay, and stated that he was out but, that, as soon as he came in she would call, with him, on Mr. and Mrs. Bronson.

So, leaving word that they would soon return, the two ladies and the detective left the hotel and went to Eightieth street.

Arrived at the Warenne mansion, they rung the bell and asked for Lucy's mother.

She was up-stairs, and would be down in a moment, the servant said.

"You go and see her," urged Mollie, speaking to Lucy.

"I will," replied the latter; "she must be in a terrible state."

So the girl went up-stairs, while Cam and his wife sat down in the parlor.

How much had transpired since their first visit to that house!

They remained quiet for a few moments, buried in their own thoughts, when suddenly Mollie spoke:

"Cam," she said, "this is a shame!"

"What, Mollie?"

"That we should be sitting idly here while Charley Lawrence is in jail."

"What can we do?"

"Do? Why, go to Police Headquarters, tell them what we know, and free the boy!"

"What do we know?"

"That Henry Warenne killed his uncle!"

"Oh, but we don't know that!"

"But Blinn's charges?"

"Only guesses."

"Is that all?"

"Yes. We haven't as much proof against Warenne as exists against Lawrence."

"You don't believe him guilty."

"No I don't!"

"And you do believe the other guilty?"

"I don't know that I can say I do. The evidence on both sides is certainly wholly circumstantial, and unfortunately for Lawrence, the proofs in his case exist."

"And in Warenne's?"

"We have—or will have—only the testimony of the captain."

"Which, it seems to me, should be sufficient."

"Not at all."

"And why not?" and Mrs. Bronson seemed to be slightly excited.

"Because," replied her husband, quietly, "the human mind does not retain impressions clearly."

"What do you mean, Cam?"

"Simply, that by the time our friend Lawrence returns from New Orleans, he will have forgotten most of the conversation he heard that night."

"You think so?"

"I know it."

"And the result will be—"

"That the counsel for the prosecution will twist him up so, that—and it's ten to one I am right—he will contradict himself twenty times."

"Then our poor friend Lawrence—"

"Will, I fear, have to suffer, that the reputation

"But you have your suspicions?"
"I suspect no one."

"Then what shall you do?"

"Throw up my commission, buy a farm, and go to raising potatoes for the Western market; that's all I'm fit for, I guess."

"Nonsense, Mr. Bronson!"

It was Mrs. Warenne that spoke.

Cam and wife turned quickly.

In a moment Lucy was beside Mollie, and Mrs. Warenne beside the detective.

"Nonsense!" repeated Mrs. Warenne, "you will do no such thing."

"I can do nothing else, madam," replied Bronson quietly, but with a certain despondency in his manner that made Mollie heart-sick.

She rose, and went to him.

"Cam," she said, "remember that you have allies, and if you have failed in your search for the murderer, there remains some one who will discover the mystery of this crime."

"Who is it?" he asked listlessly.

"I?" And Mollie burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MRS. CONLAY'S STORY.

It took some time to quiet the hysterical girl, who was so wrought up by her husband's apparent despondency that she had given way all at once.

Mrs. Warenne, Lucy and Cam hustled about, and the old butler, who was still in service, came hurrying in, in answer to the bell.

Seeing a lady half-fainting and wholly hysterical, he hurried out and in a moment returned.

He had a glass of water that, in his eagerness, he spilled down Bronson's neck.

He carried an onion that he cut as he entered and held it under Lucy's nose, causing her to shed innumerable tears, neither of joy nor grief; and he held under his arm a feather duster!

This latter was the most horrible of all the articles with which he was provided, for, taking a match from his pocket, he ignited the whole business, and then held the flaming, smoking, crackling mass under Mollie's nose.

The stench that arose therefrom was almost unbearable, and in the midst of the excitement a cab drove up to the door, from which a lady descended and rang the bell, while the cabman, leaving his horse, ascended the steps and stood by her.

The butler, still flurried, opened the door, and the first thing he did was to stick the mass of burning feathers into the faces of the new-comers!

"Ugh! ah! oh!" they coughed in unison, while the cabman, seizing the stick, flung the obnoxious thing far into the street.

"Av a dacint, onasooming gentleman teks the pains an' the trubble to call an ye, l'avin' behint him he n'ise an' bustle av the shtrates, to injy a bit av p'ace an' quietude— Ugh!"

A coughing spell interrupted him, and the lady was compelled to speak.

"We are looking for a Mr. and Mrs. Bronson," she said. "Are they here?"

"They are," cried Cam, from the parlor, coming to the door, and shaking hands warmly with Mrs. Conlay.

"They told us at the hotel that you had come up here, so, being anxious to see you, we drove up."

"Yis!"

It was Mr. Mulvaney who spoke, and he shook his head as he sniffed at the lapels of his coat.

"An' it's an owdashus thin', intirely, fur a decent man to be disinfecthed, as if he was a pest-house payshunt, instid of bein' recaved wid open arums and welcomin' wurrds!"

"Come in, Conlay," said Bronson, as he laughed at his fellow-detective's make-up.

"Come in, drop the Mulvaney part, and tell me the news."

"Is that Warenne mon in thayre?"

"He is not."

"An' phwhere is he?"

"Dead!"

"Dead? Then there is no necessity for any more masquerading here," and the couple followed Bronson into the parlor, where they were introduced to Mrs. Warenne.

Their arrival had a good effect on Mollie, who soon regained control of herself, and welcomed her friends warmly.

It did not take long to put Mr. and Mrs. Conlay in full possession of all that had happened during the ocean voyage, including the death of Warenne.

Then it was Conlay's turn.

He told of the trap he had fallen into, and of the French *café*—how he was bound and expected at every instant to be guillotined—and of the shot he had fired, which freed the knife and sent it on its deadly mission.

Then Mrs. Conlay took up the tale and told her story.

She had gone out for a time, and, returning, had found young Lawrence waiting for her. He told her of his experience at the meeting, and how Conlay had left the hall, using the little Frenchman as a battering-ram against the crowd—how, after the detective had left the hall, the meeting had turned into a free fight, in which all had taken a hand—or rather a fist—but in which no one had been seriously injured, but quiet length being restored, they adjourned, when, as Charley was leaving the hall, he had heard a whisper—a whisper that had not attracted his attention at first, but as he walked away, the words he had heard grew on him until they sounded like loud calls.

These words were but three: "Detectif—Louis—Guillotine!" That was all he heard, but they shaped themselves as he walked, until they seemed

to mean something a thousandfold more dreadful than their mere sound.

So he had hurried to the Conlays as fast as he could, and his fears were redoubled on finding that Mr. Conlay had not yet returned. He was about to go out again when Mrs. Conlay came in.

When he had finished telling her what he had heard, she asked him what he thought it meant.

Then he told her of stories he had heard in the shop, but which he had put down as entirely beyond belief—incredible, in fact—stories which related that in the city of New York existed the Society of the Red Republic, most of whose members were foreigners—French Italians, Germans—Swiss, perhaps, and that those members took a most fearful oath not to divulge any of the society's secrets. Should any one break that oath, the punishment was swift, sure, secret—decapitation by the guillotine! and Louis Beaulieu was the executioner appointed by the committee, appointed by the director.

All of this, in connection with what the young fellow had heard, and Conlay's continued absence, led Mrs. Conlay to the terrible conclusion that by some means the detective had fallen into Beaulieu's power, and that the latter had avenged, or was going to avenge, his brother's death, for she knew of Conlay's connection with the other Beaulieu's arrest.

It did not take a moment for her to make up her mind.

"Come," she cried, "I know where the *café* is; at least I know where Beaulieu takes his meals."

They hurried to the saloon, but the proprietor professed utter ignorance of what they wanted to know. He denied all knowledge of Conlay and of Beaulieu.

"Then," cried Mrs. Conlay, to her interested listeners, "I took severe measures."

"What did you do?" asked Mollie.

"I poured some brandy in his hand, while Charley held him and told him I'd light and burn it."

She stopped a moment.

"Then I heard Marty's pistol go off, knew it, went up-stairs—and, here we are!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MOLLIE DISCOVERS A SECRET.

"AND now that you are here" cried Lucy, "I know that this terrible mystery will be solved."

"Thank you, Miss Bryton," returned Conlay; "we will do our best."

Then Mollie rose.

"Mrs. Warenne," said she, "may I see the room in which your husband died?"

"Certainly, my dear; come with me."

"And will you let me stay there alone, as long as I want to?"

"Again, certainly."

"What is it, Mollie?" demanded Bronson, as Mrs. Warenne and Mrs. Conlay arose and went to the door.

"A notion, Cam—a something I cannot explain—an idea; but please do not oppose me."

"Nothing could be further from my thoughts, my good wife."

"And if he tried to," broke in Conlay, "I would not let him."

"Nor I," added Mrs. Conlay.

"For," continued her husband, "more than once I have failed, and Mrs. C. has stepped in, and, apparently by intuition, discovered what had puzzled me for days."

"I do not know that I can do anything," said Mollie; "but a suspicion has crossed my mind—one so faint and indistinct that it can scarcely be said to have tak-n shape."

"A suspicion?"

It was Bronson who asked the question.

"Yes."

"A suspicion of what?"

"I will answer that question when I have completed my investigations."

"Let her alone, Bronson," said Conlay.

"Yes," added his wife, "and I'll wager that she discovers something."

"Thank you, Mrs. Conlay," replied Mollie, simply.

"Can I not go with you?"

"I thank you again," said Mollie, "but as a member of the 'Detective Quartet' I feel that I should do something alone."

"As you wish."

So Mrs. Warenne conducted Mollie to the library, the door of which was locked.

"It has not been opened since the day of the funeral," explained the widow.

"Then n' thing has been disturbed?"

"Everything is exactly as your husband found it when he made his investigations."

She selected a key from a bunch she carried at her belt, unlocked and threw open the door.

Mollie stepped in.

"Do you mind my remaining here alone for a time, Mrs. Warenne?" she asked.

"Certainly not, my child; but—"

"It will not be the pleasantest experience in the world, I know," added Mollie, in reply to the unexpressed thought.

"For that reason I was going to offer to stay with you."

"I am superstitious about this; something tells me that I am on the brink of a discovery, which I can only make al ne."

"Then I will leave you alone, dear. Good courage, and good for me!"

And Mrs. Warenne closed the door behind her as she left the library.

Mollie was alone in the room in which Henry Warenne had died—in the room in which he had been murdered!

By whom?

That was what Mollie determined to discover, if it were possible.

So, slowly and systematically she began a thorough examination of the room.

Dust was over everything—dust on the desk, on the books, on the pictures, for Mr. Warenne had quite a collection of paintings, and several of the finest hung in the library.

One picture particularly attracted Mollie's attention. It hung on the wall to the right of the chair in which Henry Warenne had died. The light from the window fell broadly upon it. It was a striking work—a vivid reproduction of a French artist's imagination, in which three figures were prominent.

Two were seated—a man and a woman. Between them was a small table; on this table the remains of a supper and a flask. The girl was raising her glass on high, pledging her companion in the red wine it contained; she smiled in his eyes, while, at the same moment, an assassin behind him buried his knife deep between the shoulders!

The expression of the murdered man was something marvelous. The look of joy and love had merged into one of pain and horror—pain from the knife and from the knowledge that had come to him of her faithlessness—horror at the thought that she had entrapped him into supping with her that he might be killed—that she saw the knife raised and lowered behind him as she pledged him in the brimming glass.

The painting was the work of an artist, and one looking at it must needs look again.

The fascination it exercised was something terrible, and Mollie, try as she would, as she pursued her investigations, could not keep her eyes off it.

She tried, turned her head away again and again, but, do what she would, her eyes returned to the painting.

"Come," she said to herself, "this will never do: that picture gives me the shivers."

She walked over to it.

"I will turn it to the wall," she said, "and then it will not trouble me."

She took hold of the frame and tried to turn the picture away from her, but it was fastened firmly, and she could not stir it.

She stopped and thought. Then she looked at the other pictures that were scattered about. They hung loosely enough, swung as they were by cords or wire.

Why was this particular one fastened to the wall? Because it hung so low?

No; for others that hung at the same height were not fixtures.

There must be some reason for it, and this reason Mollie determined to discover.

On the desk lay a heavy bronze paper-cutter. Taking this, she tried to pry the frame away from the wall, but without result; it was fastened so firmly she could not move it.

Again she tried, but again failed.

Then she replaced the paper-cutter on the desk, and sat down for a moment.

"This is nonsense," she thought. "The picture is simply fastened—nailed—there, because—

"Because why?"

"I wish I had not seen it. It has spoiled all desire in me to look further. It is a fact that I am now more interested in discovering the reason why that picture is nailed to the wall, than I am in finding out who murdered Henry Warenne!"

"Is there any connection between the two?"

The question startled her.

She arose and walked to the picture again, and now examined it closely.

Something seemed to strike her, for she caught the frame in both hands, and the mystery of Henry Warenne's death was solved.

The keenest of the Detective Quartet had triumphed where the others had failed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

THOSE waiting in the other room hurried to the library as Mollie called them.

"Have you learned anything, dear?" asked Lucy.

"Yes; much—all."

"What can you mean?" demanded the widow.

"I have learned who killed Mr. Warenne."

"It—it was not—"

Lucy could not say a word more; she faltered, trembled, and would have fallen, but Mrs. Conlay caught her and drew her close to her

The picture flew out at the bottom, being hinged at the top.
She swung the frame up and disclosed a small closet in the wall.

In it were a revolver and a letter.
The revolver was fastened to a staple at the back of the cupboard by a strong piece of elastic cord, the size of a man's finger.

When the weapon was taken out and held by the chair in which Mr. Warene had died, the cord was stretched to its utmost tension.

Molle laid the pistol back and took out the letter.
"Read it, Cam," she said.

The detective took the letter and turned to Mrs. Warene.

"You wish it, madam?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied. "I can bear anything better than this awful suspense."

So Bronson read:

"I hate Charles Lawrence, and dying, shall try to saddle a murder on him. My hope and belief is that he will be hanged before this letter is discovered. I have changed the date on a note he sent me long ago, and mailed it to myself. I have thrown his chain under the window. I have stolen the silver and placed it in the false closet made by the one in which I place this letter.

"The butler is in the pantry; the noise of the running water will drown the report of the pistol.

"As I fire, the weapon will fall from my lifeless hand and be drawn into the cupboard. It will knock away the upright which supports the picture, when this will swing down and be caught by the catch below.

"I have experimented with this over and over, and fear no failure.

"Again I say: I hate Charles Lawrence and die that he may hang.

"And in full possession of my senses, and with a clear mind I sign this: HENRY WARENNE."

That was all.

The man had committed suicide, and his letter would clear Lawrence—which, in fact, it quickly did; for after a few legal difficulties, the young man was set free, and in a few days more was married to Lucy—the happy Lucy.

The principal attendants at the wedding were: Mr. and Mrs. Bronson; Mr. and Mrs. Conlay: The DETECTIVE QUARTET.

THE END.

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